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Ramalinga Reddy quits as minister

Says humiliated after denied B'luru Dvpt dept

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Senior Congress leader and Karnataka Minister R Ramalinga Reddy resigned from the Cabinet just two days after taking oath, citing dissatisfaction over portfolio allocation and saying he could not work against conscience.

He said Chief Minister DK Shivakumar had done a "U-turn" on an earlier assurance that he would be given the Bengaluru Development portfolio, which was instead allotted to another Krishna Byregowda after the Cabinet reshuffle announced on Thursday night.

Reddy was given the Major and Medium Irrigation department.

"I am resigning from my post because I cannot work against conscience," Reddy said at a press conference, adding, "How long can I tolerate this humiliation and what else were the options before me?"

He said he would remain in the Congress and continue as MLA, stressing he bore no anger towards Siddaramaiah,

—ANI

Shivakumar, Mallikarjun Kharge or the party high command.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, however, said he had indeed assured Reddy of the Bengaluru Development portfolio earlier, but added that the final allocation was decided by the party high command and implemented accordingly. He said Reddy had been away and that he would personally meet him on his return to discuss the issue and try to pacify him.

Shivakumar also noted that Reddy is a senior leader with a long political career and significant influence in Bengaluru, and expressed confidence that the matter would be resolved through dialogue within the party.

The resignation has triggered unease within the Karnataka Congress just days after the new Cabinet took shape, with supporters of Reddy staging protests in Bengaluru. Some of his supporters also resigned from local positions in solidarity, alleging that assurances made to their leader were not honoured. They described him as a seasoned and soft-spoken leader capable of handling major responsibilities, and said the issue was not about power but about keeping commitments and respecting seniority. The development comes at a politically sensitive time with AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi in Bengaluru. —*PTI*

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AMID OIL SHOCK

RBI holds interest rates, cuts GDP forecast

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

The RBI on Friday kept its benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent, as expected, and announced measures to attract foreign capital and support the rupee amid growing risks to growth and inflation from the prolonged West Asia conflict, elevated energy prices and global supply-chain disruptions.

To support the rupee, the measures included scrapping taxes on interest income and capital gains for eligible foreign investors in government securities, offering concessional terms for foreign-currency deposits from non-resident Indians and subsidising hedging costs for select offshore borrowings.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) unanimously voted to leave the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent, and continue with its "neutral" stance.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said India had entered the latest episode of global turbulence with stronger macroeconomic fundamentals than in previous crises, but warned that escalating geopolitical tensions, elevated commodity prices and supply disruptions were clouding the economic outlook.

- RBI lowered its growth expectations for the current fiscal, projecting real GDP growth at 6.6 per cent, below the 6.9 per cent forecast. The projection is lower than 7.6 per cent estimated for 2025-26.

The RBI said underlying inflation pressures remain subdued, but cautioned that rising costs could spill over into wages and inflation expectations. It also cited risks from a below-normal monsoon forecast and possible El Niño conditions, which could put pressure on food prices in the months ahead.

RBI lowered its growth expectations for the current fiscal, projecting real GDP growth at 6.6 per cent in 2026-27, below the 6.9 per cent April forecast. The projection is also lower than 7.6 per cent estimated for 2025-26. — *PTI*

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—PTI

India's GDP expands 7.7% in FY26; Q4 growth at 7.8%: Govt

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

India's economy expanded 7.8 per cent in the January-March quarter, exceeding forecasts on strong domestic demand and government expenditure, before rising oil prices and supply-chain disruptions began clouding the outlook.

The GDP growth compared with 7 per cent expansion a year back and 8 per cent in the previous quarter. Full-year growth accelerated to 7.7 per cent from 7.1 per cent in FY25, supported by healthy consumption and robust investment activity.

The January-March period accounted for just one month of disruptions caused by the war in Iran. The spike in oil prices and the disruption in supplies from the Middle East, a key source for India's crude oil, natural gas and LPG, will be fully visible in the current April-June quarter.

The RBI has already cut its 2026-27 (FY27) GDP growth forecast to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent, citing elevated energy and commodity prices. — *PTI*

Cong fields Vinay Karthik for K'taka Council polls

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Congress on Friday named Vinay Karthik as its fifth candidate for the biennial Karnataka Legislative Council elections from the Assembly quota, with party President Mallikarjun Kharge approving his candidature. The party had earlier fielded BK Hariprasad, Tippannappa Kamakanur, PV Mohan and Shivanna Malavalli. With support from around 136-140 MLAs, including Independents, Congress is aiming to secure a fifth seat and strengthen its majority in the Council. —*Salar News*

Delhi cops file FIR over cyberattacks on CBSE portal

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Delhi Police has filed an FIR and begun an investigation into a series of "coordinated" and "sophisticated" cyberattacks targeting the CBSE's post-result services portal, officials announced on Friday. The case was registered after the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) submitted a formal complaint. CBSE reported that it approached authorities after detecting repeated cyberattacks involving large volumes of malicious traffic from multiple IP addresses both within and outside India, over the past three days. —*PTI*

Pregnant woman among 3 killed in Manipur

IMPHAL, 5 JUNE

Three people, including a pregnant woman, were killed after armed assailants launched an attack on a village in Manipur's Kangpokpi district early on Friday, officials reported. During the assault at Loibol Khullen village in Saitu-Gamphazol subdivision around 4am, at least seven houses were destroyed in a fire.

The exchange of fire between rival groups lasted several minutes, causing villagers to flee into nearby forests. The deceased have been identified as Letkhongam Haokip, Tinmary Haokip, and Jangminlal Haokip. Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh condemned the attack, describing it as "heinous and cowardly".

He stated, "The deliberate targeting of unarmed civilians is completely unacceptable, and the government will not spare those responsible for this barbaric act." The Chief Minister directed police and security agencies to swiftly apprehend those responsible and to provide relief to the affected families.

The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body of Kuki tribes, also condemned the violence, demanding an investigation and calling it a serious violation of human rights. —*PTI*

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Bengaluru residents and school students take part in a rally near Sankey Tank in Bengaluru on Friday to mark Environment Day —*MOHAMMED ASAD* ***>>>MORE ON PAGE 5***

PUTIN OFFERS INDIA CO-PRODUCTION OF SU-57 STEALTH JET

ST PETERSBURG, 5 JUNE

Russian President Vladimir Putin has proposed that India collaborate with Russia on the Sukhoi Su-57, Russia's fifth-generation stealth fighter jet, suggesting joint production in India. During an interaction with global news agency leaders, Putin said Moscow is eager to involve New Delhi in developing the aircraft, which Russia regards as the best to date.

He stated, "In principle, this could have been our product. We made it independently. And we are ready to work with India. To work and develop. There will be no restrictions whatsoever." India has yet to fully respond, but HAL is in discussions with Sukhoi Design Bureau on possible collaboration.

While India's indigenous Advanced Multirole Combat Aircraft (AMCA) is expected by 2035, the government is considering procuring around 36 Su-57s, subject to technical requirements. The longstanding joint development of a fifth-generation fighter was shelved in 2021 due to high costs, estimated at USD 30 billion. —*PTI*

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BEGINS NEW MOVEMENT

Annamalai quits BJP, says will dump 'cult politics'

CHENNAI, 5 JUNE

K Annamalai, who quit the BJP on Friday, said he would launch a new political party with an inclusive agenda and will move away from "cult politics." Declaring that he would fight the next polls in Tamil Nadu, he said he would build a "common man" politics.

In a social media address, Annamalai, 42, who had been with the BJP for about six years, said, "I quit the BJP in a dignified manner, to usher in a new kind of politics."

The new movement proposed to be launched must from the foundation level have new dimensions and a new perspective, he said.

However, he clarified that his movement was not competing with existing parties.

"How we view the DMK, AIADMK, NTK, Seeman (NTK founder), Anbumani (PMK leader), GK Vasan (TMC Moopanar), AC Shanmugam, Paarivendhar, John Pandian, Krishnasamy, Vaiko, Premalatha madam in Tamil Nadu, is exactly how I will view the BJP," he said.

Stating that he had differences, Annamalai said he had informed the BJP leadership, including Shah, of his intent to quit the party 18 months ago. "The question was whether I am a BJP person or a Tamilian," he said. Following his conversations with senior BJP leaders, he came to the conclusion that the party's views don't align regarding Tamil Nadu," he said.

He also recounted his resistance in the past against the Central directive on language and water disputes.

Reacting to Annamalai's resignation, BJP state chief Nagenthran said, "The BJP will not lose anything due to Annamalai's resignation."

Annamalai was believed to have been upset after being replaced by Nagenthran as the Tamil Nadu BJP president and the revival of the alliance with the AIADMK. BJP state vice president Karu Nagarajan said he would quit the party to support Annamalai. — PTI

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Carry national flag, avoid provocation: CJP tells protesters

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) has issued detailed guidelines for supporters attending a protest on Saturday at Jantar Mantar, demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET-UG paper leak and CBSE examination issues.

Do's include: carrying the national flag and a book, documenting the protest responsibly, reporting miscreants to the police without confrontation, staying hydrated, and using sunscreen and caps. Participants have also been asked to share live updates, with organisers stating, "the social truth has no spokesperson except your camera."

CJP chief spokespersons Ashutosh Ranka and Saurav Das—*PTI*

Don'ts include: avoiding provocation, not engaging with trolls or provocateurs, not throwing flowers but offering them respectfully, attending in groups where possible rather than alone, and ensuring participants are not hungry before joining the demonstration.

1,000 cops

deployed by Delhi; Police says CJP sought no stir permission

The organisers have called for a peaceful, and democratic gathering. Supporters are instructed to assemble at Parliament Street Police Station at 9 am to seek permission before moving to Jantar Mantar. Founder Abhijeet Dipke, travelling from Boston, is expected to arrive in India on Saturday and proceed to the police station. Separately, organiser Abhijeet Dipke has urged supporters not to gather at Delhi airport. —*Salar News*

>>>More on Page 3

FLEX FUEL PUSH

India launches 85% ethanol fuel

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Friday unveiled E85 fuel, a high-ethanol blend designed for flex-fuel vehicles, at Rs 20 a litre discount to normal petrol.

The launch happened at an IndianOil retail outlet in New Delhi on World Environment Day, with the rollout beginning at 48 public sector fuel stations nationwide. E85 contains 80-85 per cent ethanol and 14-19 per cent petrol and can be used only in vehicles with flex fuel engines.

Puri said the government plans to expand its availability to 500 outlets by December 2026 and to about 5,000 outlets by December 2027.

He added that if half of all new two-wheelers and passenger vehicles sold in India shift to flex-fuel technology, annual ethanol demand could rise by more than 312 crore litres. This would generate roughly Rs 12,403 crore for farmers, save about Rs 15,151 crore in foreign exchange annually, and cut carbon dioxide emissions by 66.4 lakh metric tonnes. The minister urged state governments to support the transition.

In September 2025, the Congress alleged that there was a major conflict of interest in Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari "aggressively lobbying for ethanol production" in India.

Its spokesman, Pawan Khera, claimed that Gadkari's sons, Nikhil and Sarang, are closely associated with two major ethanol-producing firms, CIAN Agro Industries Infrastructure Ltd and Manas Agro Industries. —*Salar News*

Muniyappa, too, unhappy with portfolio allocation

The Food and Civil Supplies Minister wants Social Welfare or Agri dept

—PTI

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Senior Minister KH Muniyappa on Friday expressed dissatisfaction over the allocation of portfolios in the newly formed DK Shivakumar-led government, saying that seniority had not been adequately considered and urging the Congress leadership to revisit the exercise.

His remarks came hours after senior minister Ramalinga Reddy tendered his resignation over portfolio allocation, highlighting growing unease within the ruling Congress ranks.

Muniyappa, who has been allotted the Food and Civil Supplies portfolio, said he had sought either the Social Welfare or Agriculture department, which he felt would allow him to serve the public more effectively.

> **Seniority has not been maintained. Ramalinga Reddy has won eight times. I have won eight times. There are others who have won seven, six and five times. All this has to be looked at in a balanced manner** —KH Muniyappa, Minister

"Seniority has not been maintained. Ramalinga Reddy has won eight times. I have won eight times. There are others who have won seven, six and five times. All this has to be looked at in a balanced manner," he told reporters in Bengaluru.

The veteran Congress leader appealed to AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge to ensure equitable treatment of senior leaders. "All children should be treated equally and seniority must be maintained," he said.

Muniyappa said he had already conveyed his preferences to the party leadership, including during a recent interaction with Rahul Gandhi. "I wanted Social Welfare so that I could serve people. I wanted Agriculture to serve farmers. Irrigation is also a department through which farmers can be served," he said.

He urged that the allocation of responsibilities be reviewed in a manner that reflects seniority as well as the party's electoral prospects ahead of the 2028 Assembly elections.

Referring to Ramalinga Reddy's resignation, Muniyappa said experienced leaders should be given due consideration. "Except perhaps one or two others, Reddy is among the most senior leaders. All these factors should be taken into account," he said.

He also urged DK Shivakumar and KPCC Chief BK Hariprasad to consult senior leaders before finalising portfolios. "I have a political career spanning 50 years. I have worked as a foot soldier for the party all these years," he said, expressing confidence that the leadership would address the concerns and "correct the imbalance." —PTI

PROTEST HELD DEMANDING CABINET BERTH FOR ZAMEER AHMED KHAN

Hubballi, 5 June: Members of the minority community on Friday protested in Hubballi demanding that MLA BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan be inducted into the newly formed Cabinet. The protesters alleged unfair treatment of the minority community in the Cabinet. Raising slogans, they urged the government to either grant Khan a ministerial berth or appoint him as Deputy Chief Minister, citing his previous tenure as Housing, Waqf and Minority Welfare Minister in the Siddaramaiah Cabinet. They warned the Congress could face electoral consequences in the next Assembly elections if their demands were ignored. The protest comes two days after Muslim clerics demanded greater representation, including five Cabinet berths, and called for inclusion of leaders such as NA Harris, Tanveer Sait and Saleem Ahmed in the ministry.

NEITHER AN ASPIRANT, NOR EXPECTING: DINESH

Former minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, whose name was not included in the first batch of ministers under Chief Minister D K Shivakumar-led government, on Friday said he is neither an aspirant nor expecting a ministerial berth. Rao, who served as Health and Family Welfare Minister in the previous Siddaramaiah government before his portfolio was assigned to U T Khader, said he is satisfied with his current work. "Neither am I an aspirant nor am I expecting. I am happy with the work I did," he said.

Cong infighting will derail governance, says Vijayendra

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Karnataka BJP chief BY Vijayendra launched a sharp attack on the new Congress government in the state on Friday after Minister Ramalinga Reddy's resignation over portfolio, alleging that Congress infighting would derail governance.

He said the resignation of the senior Congress leader within hours of portfolio allocation exposed the deep divisions in the admin.

"Shivakumar may be the chief minister, but this is Siddaramaiah's Cabinet. The first wicket has fallen," he said.

Vijayendra alleged that the tussle within the Congress would come at the cost of governance.

Claiming that people were disillusioned with the Congress government, he said, "The people want this anti-poor Congress government to go. They want a BJP government."

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka, also took a swipe at the Congress on social media, claiming factionalism had become a feature of the Congress in Karnataka.

In a post on 'X', he said, "Kannadigas may one day wake up to a morning without the sun, but not a day without Congress infighting."

Mocking the Congress leadership's repeated interventions in the state, he said Rahul Gandhi, KC Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala should rent an office in Bengaluru instead of repeatedly travelling to the state to resolve disputes.

After the sudden resignation of Ramalinga Reddy, political temperatures soared in Mysuru as MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar and other opposition leaders launched a scathing attack on the Congress government in Mysore.

Yaduveer said that development has come to a standstill in the state due to power tussle in the Congress government. —Agencies

Cop suspended for misbehaviour & collecting bribe

MYSURU, 5 JUNE

Kollegal sub-division Deputy SP Mohan has suspended MM Hills head constable Siddaraju for collecting bribes, misbehaving with a truck driver and dereliction of duty. A video of Siddaraju collecting a bribe of Rs 200 from a maize truck driver heading towards Tamil Nadu from Hanur when Siddaraju was on duty at the Palar checkpost on the Karnataka–Tamil Nadu border went viral on social media. Following the viral video, and complaints from the trucker and the public, DySP Mohan suspended Siddaraju after verifying the video. —*SALAR NEWS*

Married woman, lover found hanging in Kolar

KOLAR, 5 JUNE

A 29-year-old married woman and her 27-year-old lover were found dead after they were found hanging from a tree in Bettabenajenahalli village in Kolar Rural Police Station limits in Kolar taluk. The incident occurred on Wednesday night. The deceased are Sumithra, 29, and Anand, 27, both residents of Honnenahalli village. Sumithra was married and the mother of two daughters, while Anand was unmarried. Police said Sumithra was employed as a nursing attendant at the Jalappa Medical College, while Anand was a farmer. The two developed friendship after Anand's father was admitted to Jalappa Hospital, where Sumithra helped with his treatment. The relationship came to the notice of Sumithra's husband, Ramu and she told him she would end the friendship. However, on Monday, Sumithra informed her husband over the phone that she was leaving him forever. Kolar Rural Police have registered a case and are investigating the circumstances leading to the deaths. However, suicide is not confirmed. —*SALAR NEWS*

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CM holds talks with German delegation on investment

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar held talks with a high-level German delegation here on Friday about investment opportunities, officials said.

The delegation, led by Mario Voigt, Minister-President of the German state of Thuringia, is on a visit to Karnataka.

Shivakumar said Karnataka and Thuringia would work closely to identify areas of mutual interest, including joint ventures, technology transfer, and the exchange of skills and talent.

He added the Government of Karnataka and Thuringia would collaborate to drive innovation and next-generation technologies.

Welcoming the delegation, Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil said Karnataka and Thuringia share strong potential for collaboration in optics and photonics, semiconductors, biotechnology, electric vehicles, renewable energy, and advanced manufacturing.

Patil invited companies from Thuringia to invest in Karnataka, noting that the state's industrial policy places special emphasis on them.

He said the state government is committed to promoting balanced industrial growth.

Emphasising that the state is increasingly focusing on manufacturing while retaining its leadership in the services sector, he urged companies from Thuringia to use the opportunities in Karnataka. Meanwhile, government issued an order implementing the free bus pass scheme for all students. The facility can be availed of by students travelling on buses operated by KSRTC, BMTC, NWKRTC, and KKRTC. —*PTI*

OMAR IN TOWN

J&K CM Omar Abdullah in conversation with his K'taka counterpart DK Shivakumar and Cong leader Jairam Ramesh in Bengaluru on Friday —*PTI*

Khader raps officials as pregnant woman sits on hospital floor

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Karnataka Minister UT Khader paid a surprise visit to a government hospital in the City to review its functioning.

He expressed displeasure after noticing a pregnant woman sitting on the floor, and pulled up officials who were absent from duty.

During the inspection on late Thursday night, the health minister checked staff attendance, interacted with hospital authorities, and reviewed patient care facilities.

He said the surprise visit was aimed at assessing ground realities at the hospital, including the challenges faced by the institution, staff attendance and punctuality and identifying shortcomings that require immediate attention.

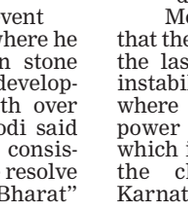
The minister said that although there were no complaints, he observed that some doctors were absent.

Khader said he would call them and issue a warning, adding that if such incidents recurred, action would be taken. Stressing that he wanted to create a better system, he said that due to his busy schedule, it was not always possible to visit every facility. —*PTI*

CONGRESS SPREADING CHAOS: MODI CRITICISES CM CHANGE

SURAT, 5 JUNE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday accused the Congress of spreading chaos and uncertainty, citing recent political developments in Karnataka where the party changed its chief minister. He said people in Congress-ruled states were dissatisfied and had responded accordingly.



Speaking at an event in Surat, Gujarat, where he laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development projects worth over Rs 18,000 crore, Modi said the Congress had consistently "belittled the resolve of Atmanirbhar Bharat" and kept India dependent on other nations.

"There are some pessimists in the country today who constantly mock the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative," he said, adding that such voices failed to recognise India's growing capacity over the past 12 years. "A country dependent on others can never attain the heights of development it truly deserves," he said.

Modi further alleged that the Congress had spent the last 12 years creating instability. "People in states where the Congress is in power are dissatisfied, which is why they changed the chief minister in Karnataka," he said. —*PTI*

Everyone will remain united: Kharge files RS nomination

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday filed his nomination from Karnataka for the 18 June Rajya Sabha elections. He gave the papers to Karnataka Vidhana Soudha Assembly Secretary MK Vishalakshi.

He was accompanied by Lok Sabha Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, Karnataka Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Lok Sabha Member of Parliament (MP) KC Venugopal and Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee President BK Hariprasad (**in pic**).

Congress candidates Mansoor Ali Khan and Pawan Khera will submit their nomination papers on Saturday morning.

"All the MLAs and my leaders have unanimously chosen me," Kharge told reporters. "I am confident that everyone will remain united and ensure the victory of the Congress candidates."

The Election Commission had on June 1 issued a notification for biennial elections to 24 Rajya Sabha seats from ten states.

The party has fielded Meenakshi Natarajan from Madhya Pradesh, Praveen Chakravarty from Tamil Nadu, Pranav Jha from Jharkhand, and Neeraj Dangi from Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, BJP has released a list of 11 names for the same.

It includes Tai Tagak from Arunachal Pradesh; Rajubhai Shukla, Mukeshbhai Rathwa, Mansingh Parmar and Jitendra Meghjibhai Kanzariya from Gujarat; Tarun Chugh and Rajneesh Agrawal from Madhya Pradesh; A Sharda Devi from Manipur; and Alka Gurjar and Satish Poonia from Rajasthan. —*ANI*

KPTCL USES BIODEGRADABLE OIL FOR GREEN POWER TRANSMISSION

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL) on Friday said it has begun replacing conventional mineral oil with environment-friendly, biodegradable natural ester oil in its high-voltage transformer network as part of efforts to make power transmission greener in Karnataka.

The initiative aims to improve grid safety, reduce environmental risks and extend the operational life of ageing transmission assets, while supporting the state's push towards sustainable energy infrastructure.

According to an official statement, KPTCL currently operates 3,754 transformers across the state. As part of its modernisation drive, it has already converted 45 high-capacity transformers to natural ester oil.

Instead of replacing ageing transformers with high capital expenditure, KPTCL is upgrading units that are over 15 years old, improving performance and extending service life at lower cost.

Officials said natural ester oil, derived from vegetable sources, is fully biodegradable, has a higher fire point and offers better thermal performance than mineral oil. This makes it suitable for both urban areas and remote substations where safety is critical.

The pilot deployment has already saved around 1,500 litres of mineral oil, the utility said, adding that the programme will be expanded gradually across the network.

State Energy Minister KJ George said the move enhances fire safety and reduces environmental risks, calling it a step towards a "safer, greener and more resilient power sector". —*PTI*

TWO OTHERS ESCAPE

Tusker tramples IPS officer's wife to death in Kodagu

MYSURU, 5 JUNE

Kodagu police said on Friday that **Sandhya Achaya**, 51, wife of senior IPS officer Sunil Achaya, was fatally attacked by a tusker on her estate when she was inspecting coffee plantations with her estate manager and driver. The latter narrowly escaped injury when they ran for safety as the elephant charged at the group.

Achaya was rushed to Lopamudra Hospital in Gonikoppal, where she was declared brought dead, having sustained serious injuries.

A senior forest officer from Nagarahole Tiger Reserve confirmed the attack. Kodagu Superintendent of Police Bindu Mani confirmed to media that police have registered a case and a probe is on.

The increase in human-wildlife conflict in the area has triggered concerns among locals, especially as there have been several such fatal attacks in recent years. They urged the forest department officials and the government of Karnataka to initiate measures in Thithimathi Wildlife Range so that they don't infringe on human habitations bordering on the forests. These could include cordoning off the forest, adding official patrols, assessing forest boundaries and ensuring that sufficient water and food is available to the elephants. A planter from the area, GG Rajendra, told The New Indian Express that he plans to file a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to ensure that wildlife does not stray into estates. — *Salar News*

Yatnal detained during hijab ban withdrawal stir

VIJAYPURA, 5 JUNE

Police on Friday detained expelled BJP leader and Vijayapura City Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and his supporters while they attempted to distribute saffron scarves to students in protest against the previous government's decision to permit the wearing of hijabs in educational institutions.

Yatnal's supporters had gathered near Darbar Educational Institution's main gate amid heavy police presence, including Vijayapura Superintendent of Police Lakshman Nimbargi. Police informed Yatnal that no programme had been permitted outside the institution and asked him to leave, leading to an argument. The police subsequently detained Yatnal and his supporters and later released them at the area police station premises.

Yatnal argued that the former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's decision had made an exception for Muslim girl students, when uniforms are intended to eliminate distinctions. He noted that the proposal to distribute saffron scarves to Hindu students in schools and colleges had been announced on the very day the restrictions on hijabs were withdrawn.

"If Muslim students are allowed to wear hijabs, what is wrong if Hindu students wear saffron scarves and apply saffron tilak on their foreheads?" Yatnal asked. He also claimed that Hindu students would be encouraged to greet teachers with "Jai Shri Ram" and "Jai Bhim" instead of the customary "Yes, Sir" or "Yes, Madam" during attendance. — *Salar News*

—PTI

India and US will agree on trade deal: Trump

WASHINGTON, 5 JUNE

US President Donald Trump said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a good friend and expressed confidence that the United States and India would reach a trade agreement. "We will get to a deal because I like your prime minister a lot. He is a good friend of mine. We get along great, and we are gonna make a deal," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office on Thursday. Responding to a question on the trade deal, Trump said India had taken advantage of United States policies for years and charged "tremendous tariffs. They imposed tremendous tariffs to our companies, and we didn't charge them anything," President Trump said. *—PTI*

Andhra RS polls: TDP to contest 3 seats, Jana Sena 1

AMARAVATI, 5 JUNE

The Jana Sena Party on Friday announced Vijayawada-based businessman Lingamaneni Ramesh as its candidate for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections. The ruling NDA alliance in AP on Thursday decided that the TDP will contest three of the four upcoming RS seats, while its ally Jana Sena will field a candidate for the remaining seat. The retiring members from AP are A Ayodhya Rami Reddy, Parimal Nathwani, P Subhash Chandra Bose, and S Satish Babu. Reddy, Nathwani, and Bose belong to the YSRCP, while Babu is from the ruling TDP. Currently, the YSRCP holds seven RS seats, followed by the TDP with two seats. In the Assembly, the TDP holds 135 seats, followed by Jana Sena with 21 and the BJP with 8, while the YSRCP has only 11 seats. *—PTI*

—PTI

Nishant Kumar is Janata Dal(U) candidate for Bihar

PATNA, 5 JUNE

The JD(U) on Friday announced four candidates for the upcoming polls to the Bihar legislative council, which included Nishant Kumar, the son of party chief and former chief minister Nitish Kumar. Biennial polls to nine seats of the 75-member strong Vidhan Parishad were announced recently, along with the bypoll to the one vacated by the JD(U) president, who became Rajya Sabha MP in April. Nishant entered politics weeks before his father stepped down as chief minister, and later got inducted into the new state cabinet last month. The full tenure of a legislative council member is six years, while the term of the berth vacated by Nitish Kumar ends in 2030. Filing of nomination papers for the biennial elections, as well as the by-poll, ends on 8 June. *—PTI*

CJP did not request nod for protest: Delhi Police

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Delhi Police has not received any request for permission from the digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) regarding a protest at Jantar Mantar, an official said on Friday. "We will examine their request if and when they seek permission," a senior police officer told PTI. Police said they are keeping a close watch on the situation and are prepared to deploy additional personnel in sensitive areas, if required, to maintain law and order. *—PTI*

Annamalai starts new movement

He had informed Home Minister Amit Shah of his intent to quit the BJP 18 months ago

CHENNAI, 5 JUNE

Former Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai, who quit the party on Friday, said he was beginning a new political journey aiming to usher in "common man politics," distancing itself from traditional personality-driven politics and rejecting sycophancy and hereditary power.

"Let's change ourselves, and change will happen naturally... the movement's core principle is let's change, let's bring change (maruvom, maatruvom)," the former IPS officer said in his social media address.

"Our politics is not for the sake of opposing. How we view the DMK, AIADMK, NTK, Seeman (NTK founder), Anbumani (PMK leader), GK Vasan (TMC Moopanar), AC Shanmugam, Paarivendhar, John Pandian, Krishnasamy, Vaiko, Premalatha madam - in Tamil Nadu, is exactly how I will view the Bharatiya Janata Party," he said.

K Annamalai speaks in a video message after resigning from the BJP —PTI

Annamalai stated that as per the Tamil culture, his principle was to inform and exit an organisation with respect and described his departure from the BJP as an extension of

> **We are not here to compete with anyone. Let the ruling party and the opposition parties exist. They can express their policies, and we will express ours in due course**
>
> -Annamalai

Tamil virtue.

Stating that he had state-level differences, Annamalai said he had informed the BJP leadership, including Shah, of his intent to quit the party 18 months ago.

"It was a great conflict whether I am a BJP person or a Tamilian. I told the party on 4 December, 2024, that I am going to resign. The party asked me to finish the elections and then go," he said.

Following his conversations with the senior leaders, he came to the conclusion that the party's views don't align regarding Tamil Nadu, he claimed.

Tracing his political journey from 2009 under the guidance of "Captain" Vijayakanth, founder of DMDK, he said before joining the BJP in 2020, Tamil film superstar Rajinikanth had invited him to join his movement. But he joined the BJP to honour a commitment.

On regional policy, he said he would prioritise Tamil Nadu's welfare and recounted internal resistance in the past against the Central directive on language policy and interstate water disputes.

Annamalai called upon the people of the state to unite for a "grand revolution" aimed at positioning the state as the premier region within the country. *—PTI*

What's next?

Annamalai announced the launch of an organisation: wetheleader.org and setting up of the APJ Abdul Kalam Centre for Ethics and Politics in Coimbatore. Volunteers could register through the website, he added. By 8.30pm on Friday, the site had at least 8.5 lakh people. He proposed term limits for elected representatives, shifting the focus from the CMO to 30,000 local body representatives and capping the number of times an individual could serve as an MLA or MP. *—PTI*

Vijay's 1st cabinet meet unveils roadmap for 436 projects

CHENNAI, 5 JUNE

The first meeting of the Tamil Nadu cabinet led by CM C Joseph Vijay, on Friday, unveiled a comprehensive roadmap for 436 targeted projects across various government departments, Electricity Minister CTR Nirmal Kumar said.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Kumar stated that the Chief Minister has set specific, long-term goals for every department, emphasising time-bound execution of welfare and development initiatives.

The minister underscored that the departmental plans mainly incorporate the promises in TVK's election manifesto.

He said the cabinet meeting prioritised accelerating development and creating enhanced employment opportunities for youth and women.

The team also talked about formulating robust welfare measures for farmers and boosting industrial expansion and ensuring transparent and corruption-free governance.

- Minister Kumar stated that the Chief Minister has set specific, long-term goals for every department, emphasising time-bound execution of welfare and development initiatives

Minister Kumar highlighted that achieving a "Drug-Free Tamil Nadu" remains a top priority. He noted that the government has already taken decisive action by ordering the closure of 117 TASMAC liquor shops.

When questioned about the government's stance on the proposed Parandur airport project, against which Vijay protested before coming to power, and other industrial projects, the minister stated that detailed policy announcements would be made.

Meanwhile, speaking to reporters, Chidambaram MP Thol Thirumavalavan said, "Our primary demand is a thorough, data-driven census." He underlined the pressing need to map the detailed educational, social, and economic parameters of Scheduled Castes and other marginalised sections across the state. *—PTI*

11 BJP MLAs, one AGP legislator take oath in Assam

GUWAHATI, 5 JUNE

BJP MLAs Ranoj Pegu, Ashok Singhal, Biswajit Daimary and AGP's Keshab Mahanta were among the 12 legislators who took oath as ministers on Friday as Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expanded his cabinet, taking the strength of the council of ministers to 17.

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to the MLAs at a function at the Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir here.

The chief minister, Union ministers Sarbananda Sonowal and Pabitra Margherita, Assam Legislative Assembly Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass, BJP state president Dilip Saikia and several NDA MLAs were present on the occasion.

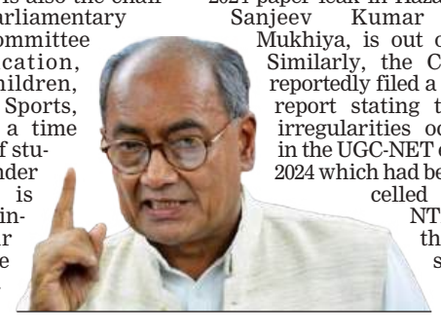
AGP's Mahanta, who was in Himanta Biswa Sarma's previous cabinet, was included in the new cabinet. *—PTI*

Digvijaya asks PM to issue white paper on exam leaks

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh has written to Prime Minister Modi over the NEET-UG paper leak issue, urging the government to issue a white paper documenting paper leaks in NTA-conducted examinations in the last eight years and the action taken on them.

Singh, who is also the chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, said that at a time when lakhs of students are under pressure, it is critical to reinforce their faith in the system. There is no public record of cases relating to paper leaks and how they are being prosecuted by the CBI and other investigative agencies, he said.



Amidst the absence of official information, there are plenty of reports and rumours, Singh pointed out.

"For instance, one complaint I have received is that the main accused in the NEET-UG 2024 paper leak in Hazaribagh, Sanjeev Kumar alias Mukhiya, is out on bail. Similarly, the CBI has reportedly filed a closure report stating that no irregularities occurred in the UGC-NET exam of 2024 which had been cancelled by the NTA back then," he said. *— PTI*

TMC's Firhad Hakim quits Kolkata Mayor post

KOLKATA, 5 JUNE

Senior TMC leader Firhad Hakim resigned as mayor of Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) on Friday, saying he had obtained the consent of party supremo Mamata Banerjee after finding himself unable to function properly in the role. He added that he was leaving with his "head held high."

Hakim became the first Muslim mayor of KMC in November 2018. A prominent minority face of the TMC and a key figure in its urban organisation, he reflected on his tenure at a pre-resignation press conference: "During my tenure as mayor, Kolkata faced several difficult situations, including Cyclone Amphan and the COVID-19 pandemic," he said. Hakim, also an MLA, had handled several key ministerial portfolios in the TMC governments over the years.

Recalling his appointment, Hakim admitted he initially doubted whether he could live up to the legacy of the city's most distinguished former leaders. While he was confident about working for the city, he noted that he never expected to become a worthy successor to "stalwarts like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Chittaranjan Das, who once occupied this chair."

Hakim submitted his resignation to the office of KMC Chairperson Mala Roy amid ongoing political turbulence within the party following its defeat in the West Bengal assembly elections.

His exit comes at a time when the TMC is grappling with series of resignations by councillors in the last few weeks, adding to uncertainty within the party. *—PTI*

IT'S BACK TO OLD HANDS

Mamata turns to loyalists, old timers in TMC revamp

KOLKATA, 5 JUNE

In a sweeping organisational overhaul triggered by the split in the TMC's 28-year history, party supremo Mamata Banerjee on Friday unveiled a new leadership structure packed with loyalists and old timers.

The reconstituted organisational committee, announced after a meeting of the party's national executive at Banerjee's Kalighat residence, marked a clear shift away from the next-generation leadership that had risen in recent years under the stewardship of party general secretary Abhishek Banerjee.

While Abhishek retained his post as general secretary, the party appointed Rajya Sabha MPs Derek O'Brien and Dola Sen as joint secretaries to assist him, a move widely seen as an attempt to institutionalise collective decision-making at the top. The changes come just two days after the TMC dissolved all its committees and front organisations in West Bengal following a revolt by a large section of its MLAs, who have challenged the party leadership after its recent electoral setback. Senior leader Chandrima Bhattacharya replaced veteran organiser Subrata Bakshi as the party's state president.

- The new organisational committee marked a clear shift away from the next-gen leadership that had risen in recent years under the stewardship of Abhishek

Bakshi, one of the architects of the TMC's organisational expansion since the late 1990s and among Mamata Banerjee's most trusted political lieutenants, was shifted to the position of vice-president in the working committee. Party sources said Bakshi had sought to be relieved of organisational responsibilities because of age and health concerns.

The new state committee bears the unmistakable imprint of Mamata Banerjee's trusted old-timers and loyalists. *— PTI*

INDIA dead, exists only on paper after DMK boycott: BJP

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The INDIA bloc is "dead and buried." It may be existing on paper and TV screens perhaps but not in reality, the BJP said on Friday after the DMK announced that it will not participate in the alliance's meeting in New Delhi on 8 June.

In a major setback for the opposition alliance, the DMK said on Thursday that it would stay away from the meeting as the Congress is taking part in it.

The decision is a continuation of its stand against the Congress ever since it joined hands with the TVK.

"INDIA has now broken into pieces. It was predicted that on 4 May there would be nothing called INDIA left, and that has come true," BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said.

Questioning the partnership of the opposition parties, Poonawalla claimed that its parties are rivals in several states.

He claimed that INDIA parties are fighting one another in states while projecting unity at the national level.

Referring to the Samajwadi Party, he claimed that it has signalled its intent to go alone in the UP polls.

Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said on Friday that there was no disunity in INDIA, and maintained that the Sanjay Raut said through the TVK, the Congress has got a Rajya Sabha seat vacated by the AIADMK. *— PTI*

YOUTH-DRIVEN MOVEMENT

CJP set for Delhi protest today

HINGOLI, 5 JUNE

Ahead of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP)'s proposed protest in Delhi on 6 June, party founder Abhijeet Dipke's associates in his village of Santuk Pimpri in Hingoli district of Maharashtra, feel the protest called by him is for a serious cause.

Earlier this week, Dipke announced that he would return to India from Boston in the US, where he just finished a master's course in public relations, to launch a peaceful protest seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over examination-related lapses. In a video, he alleged that exam-related controversies and disruptions had left students anxious, and demanded accountability from the government.

"As far as the agitation is concerned, the government should co-operate with the protesters and the latter should also follow the rules and regulations," said Vijay Puri, sarpanch of Santuk Pimpri village and a relative of Dipke. "The issue he is speaking about now is of national importance."

The movement is now reminiscent of Anna Hazare's 2011 campaign —PTI

Many public figures have subscribed to the CJP, a youth-driven social media movement founded by Dipke, since its launch last month. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk has said he will join the protest if Minister Pradhan does not step down by 5 June.

The movement, which has now become an organised campaign, is reminiscent of Anna Hazare's 2011 campaign to enact The Lokpal Bill, 2011. The government had ceded to Hazare's demands after his hunger strike.

Meanwhile, NCP (Sharad Pawar) (NCP (SP)) leader Rohini Khadse on Friday urged CM Fadnavis to take up the issue of security for Dipke with the Centre, citing the possibility of an attack. She claimed Dipke has received threats from those who oppose his campaign. *— PTI*

HC refuses urgent plea against CJP protest

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to hear a petition raising law and order concerns related to digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party's (CJP) call for a protest at Jantar Mantar here on 6 June. The protest is to demand the resignation of Union Education Minister Pradhan over examination-related lapses.

The counsel for 'Save India Foundation' mentioned the plea, which sought deployment of security measures at the IGI Airport, metro stations, and highway entry points. It also requested that authorities "restrict, regulate, or relocate the scheduled gathering" to maintain public order and ensure emergency services are not obstructed by those who are "instigating" from "overseas jurisdictions," including the USA and Australia. It further alleged that CJP is "utilising overseas-tethered servers to execute a transnational institutional destabilization agenda."

Earlier this month, CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke called on supporters to join his protest as well as at the airport in Delhi on 6 June. *— PTI*

A man works on a poster on Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) ahead of CJP's protest on 6 June in Mumbai—PTI

Couple dragged & killed after truck hits their bike

GORAKHPUR, 5 JUNE

A couple was killed and their seven-year-old son seriously injured after a speeding truck hit their motorcycle from behind near Bhopa crossing in Chauri Chaura in Gorakhpur on Friday morning, police said. The victims, identified as Santraj Bharti, 35, and Premshila, 32, residents of Deoria district, were dragged nearly 100 metres and died instantly. The couple was heading to Tarkulha Devi Temple with their son, Sangam, who was thrown off and sustained serious injuries. The truck driver fled, abandoning the vehicle a kilometre away. Police seized the truck and are searching for the driver. The bodies are at post-mortem, and the family includes three children—Tannu, Nigam, and Sangam. *—PTI*

—FREEPIK

11 hospitalised after ammonia leak in Keralam

KOCHI, 5 JUNE

At least 11 people were hospitalised with breathing difficulties following an ammonia leak at an ice plant in Munambam on Friday afternoon, police said. The leak was swiftly controlled by fire department personnel. Residents nearby reported breathing issues and were shifted to a primary health centre, where their conditions improved after treatment. Police confirmed, "The leak was brought under control promptly," and added that the affected individuals are now stable. No fatalities have been reported, and investigations are going on to determine the cause of the ammonia leak. *—PTI*

JEE-Advanced data breach claims wrong: IIT Roorkee

No info compromised after cloud misconfiguration

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Claims of a data breach and privacy violation affecting lakhs of JEE (Advanced) aspirants are "misleading and factually incorrect," IIT Roorkee said on Friday, asserting that no sensitive information was compromised after a temporary cloud storage misconfiguration.

Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, which conducted the exam this year, said that information circulating on social media "does not accurately reflect what happened" and alleged an attempt to spread misinformation.

The JEE (Advanced) is the gateway for admission to undergraduate programmes at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and other premier engineering institutions.

"Claims of a data breach and privacy violation affecting lakhs of JEE (Advanced) aspirants are misleading and factually incorrect. The information circulating on social media is misleading and does not accurately reflect what happened. There is an attempt at spreading misinformation," IIT Roorkee said in a series of posts on X.

The JEE (Advanced) is the gateway for admission to undergraduate programmes in IITs and other premier engineering institutions*—PTI*

The institute said some technical interventions were undertaken on an expedited basis on 2 June to assist candidates facing difficulties in accessing admit card data and to ensure the smooth functioning of the registration process.

It said these interventions resulted in a "minimal, temporary misconfiguration" in a cloud storage component, which was identified and reported by ethical hacker Rylen Anil.

"The issue was immediately rectified, and access to the data was restricted," the institute said. The affected data was "read only," meaning no data could be edited or deleted, IIT Roorkee said, adding that an analysis of cloud access logs confirmed that no bulk download had occurred.

Earlier, IIT-Roorkee had confirmed that the JEE (Advanced) 2026 results portal faced a cloud storage configuration issue after a teenager, who identifie himself as a cyber security researcher, claimed that details of lakhs of students were accessible without authorisation. *— PTI*

FIRE THAT KILLED 21

Delhi B&B owner helped Bangladeshis to get fake docu

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Flourish Stays owner Lovkesh Bajaj in police custody *—ANI*

The owner of the Malviya Nagar hotel where a fire claimed 21 lives earlier this week, had been arrested last year for "facilitating" the illegal stay of Bangladeshis through allegedly forged Indian documents, police records show.

Lavkesh Bajaj, proprietor of Flourish Stays B&B, is currently in four-day police custody in connection with the devastating fire at the south Delhi establishment on Wednesday. Investigators are probing the circumstances surrounding the blaze and are searching for others associated with the hotel's management.

Police said Bajaj was among the accused in a case registered at Paharganj police station on 29 January 2025 over the alleged illegal stay of Bangladeshis in Delhi using Indian ID documents obtained through fraud.

The case was filed under BNS provisions.

Police found that two persons, identified as Sweety Sarkar alias Beauty Hawladar alias Johra Khatoon, and her daughter Pushpo Sarkar alias Pushpo Hawlader alias Puspo Saiyada Akther, along with Pushpo's minor son, were staying in a house in Paharganj allegedly on the basis of forged Indian ID documents, including passports and Aadhaar.

Investigation revealed that Sweety Sarkar had obtained the Indian passport using an address in Chattarpur Enclave in south Delhi.

Verification of the address allegedly established that the property belonged to Bajaj.

"During interrogation, Lovekesh admitted that he had knowingly permitted the accused persons to use his residential address for obtaining Indian ID documents in lieu of monetary consideration," a senior police officer said. Bajaj, Sweety Sarkar and Pushpo Sarkar were arrested. Police later filed a chargesheet against the three. A Police Information Report was also submitted regarding the minor child for action, officials said. *— PTI*

Muzaffarpur hospital fire tragedy toll rises to 6

MUZAFFARPUR, 5 JUNE

The toll in the hospital fire tragedy in Bihar's Muzaffarpur rose to six with one of the patients taken out from the smoke-filled ICU dying, an official said on Friday.

Muzaffarpur District Magistrate Subrat Sen said the deceased, identified as Brajnandan Rai, was from Kurhani block in the north Bihar district.

An ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh was paid to Rai's family, as per the state government's policy.

On Thursday, five patients had choked to death when smoke filled the ICU of the hospital after a short circuit, and the hospital staff allegedly ran away, leaving them in the lurch. *— PTI*

Ebola: Another Sudanese with fever in Hyd hospital

HYDERABAD, 5 JUNE

A Sudanese national with fever was admitted to the state-run Gandhi Hospital here, taking the total number of Ebola-related admissions at the facility to two, officials said on Friday.

The Sudanese, a student in his 20s, was referred to Gandhi Hospital on Thursday from a private health facility, they said.

The student's condition improved, and he had no fever on Friday. His attendant was advised to stay in isolation at home.

Earlier, another Sudanese, aged 35, who arrived at the RGI Airport on Thursday, was shifted to the isolation ward of Gandhi Hospital for tests after he was found to have a fever during thermal screening at the airport.

The 35-year-old, who had come to Hyderabad for knee surgery, had no fever as of Friday morning and was asymptomatic, officials said.

Test reports of both individuals are awaited.

The Telangana government has set up a special isolation ward with 10 beds at the state-run Gandhi Hospital for Ebola cases.

Meanwhile, in Jaipur a 19-year-old Ugandan woman has been admitted to a government hospital here after showing symptoms similar to Ebola virus infection, health officials said on Friday, adding that they have not confirmed the disease so far. *— PTI*

MONSOON SCENES

Heavy monsoon rains lashed Keralam on Friday flooding many areas. The IMD declared red alerts in some districts of the state.*—PTI*

Rs 294 cr lands in Bihar plumber's a/c, probe on

GAYA JI, 5 JUNE

A plumber from a nondescript village in Bihar's Gaya Ji district was left stunned after discovering that the balance in his bank account had jumped from a mere Rs 113 to Rs 294 crore. Shocked by the bank balance, Vikash Kumar informed the local leaders of Mastpura village about it on Thursday, and on their suggestion, he approached the police. Station House Officer (SHO) of Bodh Gaya police station, Manoj Kumar Singh, said, "This is a sensitive financial case. Bank records, server logs, transaction IDs and linked accounts are being examined." He said police were trying to determine whether the amount credited was due to a banking error, a technical fault or fraud. I Vikash said he has no idea from where the money came from, and did not attempt to use it. He said that his bank account had just Rs 113, after he withdrew about Rs 1,300 sent by a customer. *—PTI*

Short circuit blaze in Noida flat, family rescued

NOIDA, 5 JUNE

Fire broke out in a 12th-floor flat in a an apartment complex in Sector 75 here on Friday, after which a family trapped inside was rescued, and the building was evacuated, officials said. Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Gautam Buddh Nagar, Pradeep Kumar said the fire was caused by a short circuit in an air conditioner. Officials said the incident occurred around 7 am at the Ivy County complex in Sector 75, where flames erupted from a flat on the 12th floor of the 28-storey building. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath directed officials to speed up relief and rescue operations and ensure medical assistance, if required, according to an official statement issued in Lucknow. The Chief Minister also directed the administration at all levels to remain alert always *—PTI*

SC rejects plea to fill vacant posts in state rights panels

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a petition seeking a direction for the speedy filling up of the posts of chairperson and members of some state human rights commissions.

Justices Vikram Nath and V Mohana asked the petitioner as to why he has not approached the high court concerned.

After the bench showed its disinclination in entertaining the plea, the counsel appearing for the petitioner requested permission to withdraw the petition.

The bench permitted him to withdraw the plea with liberty to avail remedy as available in law.

During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel referred to the vacancies in the state human rights commissions and said that the UP Human Rights Commission does not have a chairperson for the last two years.

He said notice was earlier issued by the top court in a similar matter.

The bench asked why the petitioner had filed a separate petition.

The counsel said the earlier petition was regarding the filling up of vacancies in the National Human Rights Commission, while the petition filed now is about relates vacancies in the state human rights commissions which deal with many cases. *— PTI*

AI no longer speculation but reality: CJI

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Artificial intelligence is no longer a speculative technology but an operational reality and poses one of the most significant tests for international law, CJI Surya Kant said, underlining that choices made during this decade will shape the future relationship between technology, power, freedom, and justice.

He also stressed that technology itself is neither inherently benevolent nor harmful.

Speaking at a public lecture in Birkbeck College of University of London on "Artificial Intelligence and International Law," he said unlike previous technological revolutions, AI does not merely enhance human capacity; it increasingly participates in decision-making processes that were historically considered uniquely human.

"The main challenge before us is to ensure that, in an age of intelligent machines, humanity retains authorship of the principles by which it is governed," he stressed.

CJI Kant, who is on a six-day UK trip, said, artificial intelligence presents unprecedented opportunities for strengthening the administration of justice.

The CJI wondered whether AI will affect international law as the transformation is already underway and the real question is whether the existing architecture of international law possesses the elasticity necessary to absorb this disruption. *— PTI*

Colleague stabs woman 20 times in Delhi office

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

A woman working at a private company in Punjab's Mohali was murdered by her colleague, believed to be her ex-boyfriend, following an argument over their relationship.

The accused, identified as Harvinder Mann alias Harry, later attempted to take his own life by stabbing his throat repeatedly. The incident was captured on CCTV footage installed in the office. Harry was seen entering the office around 7.40pm on Thursday and stabbing Dimple from behind while she was sitting at her desk.

As she tried to escape, he followed her, dragged her by the hair near the office door, and continued stabbing her. Despite efforts by four to five employees to intervene, they were unsuccessful. Harry stabbed Dimple over 20 times as she lay motionless. He then entered the office, where the woman was initially sitting, and began stabbing his own throat, stabbing himself over 30 times.

Employees, terrified, immediately contacted police and rushed both individuals to Fortis Hospital. Dimple was declared dead, while Harry is in critical condition. Dimple and Harry worked together for about three years at a private packers and movers firm,

Dimple was declared dead, while Harry is critical*—SCREENGRAB*

developing a friendship and reportedly being in a relationship that ended some time ago.

The accused allegedly tried to rekindle their relationship, but was unsuccessful, which reportedly left him upset and mentally distressed. Following the argument on Thursday, Harry reportedly stabbed Dimple. Police are still investigating the exact motive behind the crime and examining their relationship.

A forensic team collected evidence from the scene, and a case has been registered. The post-mortem is scheduled for today. *— Agencies*

Khan Sir named in FIR over attack on his coaching centre

PATNA, 5 JUNE

Faisal Khan, popularly known as 'Khan Sir', has been named in an FIR in connection with vandalism at his coaching centre in Bihar's Patna, police said on Friday.

A group of 15-20 people had allegedly vandalised the Khan Global Studies Institute and pelted stones on its premises on Tuesday night.

Patna SSP Kartikeya Sharma told PTI that the educator has been named in the FIR and he will be questioned by the police.

He, however, did not specify the charges against Khan.

Police had on Thursday detained two guards of the coaching centre for allegedly firing shots during the vandalism. The detention came after a purported video circulated on social media, showing the guards firing shots.PTI, however, could not independently verify the video's authenticity.

Soon after the vandalism, Khan had alleged that persons from a rival coaching institute were behind the firing, though he later said only a police investigation could confirm whether firing had actually taken place.

Members of a rival coaching institute had held a press conference on Thursday, alleging that Khan himself orchestrated the incident. *— PTI*

POOR & ORPHAN VICTIMS

Gang 'selling' minor girls for marriage busted

LUCKNOW, 5 JUNE

The Lucknow Police have made three arrests after busting an inter-state gang allegedly involved in luring minor girls under the pretence of offering help, only to "sell" them for marriage in Rajasthan, officials said. The police also nabbed a juvenile in connection with the case.

The accused allegedly targeted vulnerable girls, including those without parents or from financially disadvantaged families. They sent the girls' photographs to associates in Rajasthan, where marriages were arranged in exchange for money, police said.

DCP (Lucknow South) Amit Kumar Anand on Thursday said the arrests were made by the Mohanlalganj Police after investigating the disappearance of two minor girls, aged 16 and 12, from Ganihar village on 12 May.

The suspects allegedly targeted vulnerable girls, including those without parents or from poor families. They sent the girls' photographs to their associates in Rajasthan, where marriages were arranged for money*—X/LUCKNOW*

The girls' grandmother had lodged a complaint, claiming that they were taken away by a juvenile relative and his associate, Priya on the pretext of visiting their mother.

Following the complaint, police registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and formed four teams, including one in plain clothes, to locate the girls, the DCP said. The two girls were safely recovered on 18 May.

The accused were identified as Anurag Yadav, 25, Mohammad Akhtar, 32, and Priya Patel alias Sheila, 23. Patel mentioned to the police that she received between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakh for arranging each girl's marriage. *—PTI*

Kerala HC dismisses CMRL appeal against ED probe

KOCHI, 5 JUNE

The Kerala High Court on Friday dismissed an appeal filed by Cochin Minerals and Rutile Ltd (CMRL), allowing the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to continue its money laundering probe into the mining company's financial dealings with Veena T, daughter of former Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

The High Court also declined the request by the lawyer for to protect it for two weeks so that it can move an appeal before the Supreme Court. It further rejected the company's plea to quash the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) registered by the ED as well as the plea to quash the summons issued in the case.

The High Court rejected the CMRL's contention that it has immunity granted by the Interim Board for Settlement from action undertaken under any law, saying that the immunity was applicable only to offences under the Income Tax Act and the Wealth Tax Act.

The case stems from Income Tax searches conducted at the company's offices and the residences of its senior executives in January 2019. It was later investigated by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office following a complaint by BJP leader Shone George. *—PTI*

AI could use 3% of world's power, drain drinking water

One argument often used to quell concerns about the rising energy and resource demand of data centres is that artificial intelligence (AI) models will need less in the future as they improve and become more efficient.

But this seemingly logical thinking is a trap, according to a new United Nations report that quantifies the environmental costs of AI.

The report estimates that by 2030, AI's energy use could double to consume 3 per cent of the world's electricity, produce emissions equal to the UK and deplete more water for cooling than the annual drinking water needs of the global population.

It also anticipates that the use of AI will follow an economic principle known as the "Jevons paradox", which predicts that when technological improvements increase the efficiency of a resource, it leads to a rise, rather than a fall, in the total consumption of that resource.

The paradox is named after economist William Stanley Jevons, who observed this effect with the use of coal in 19th-century England. Efficiency gains did not reduce overall consumption. Instead, the lower costs resulted in expanded use and higher overall demand.

As AI models become cheaper and more attractive, the report expects this to encourage new uses and higher volumes of use, eroding and possibly erasing any savings from efficiency advances.

To avoid falling into this trap, it lays out a roadmap for responsible AI use based on guiding principles of transparency, efficiency by design, equity and justice, lifecycle responsibility, global cooperation and sustainable use

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SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Last year, data centres already consumed as much electricity as Saudi Arabia, which ranks as the world's 11th largest electricity consumer.

If electricity use doubles as projected by 2030, the associated carbon footprint would require 6.7 billion trees grown over 10 years to offset this demand. Data centres would also require 9.3 trillion litres of water and land, nearly 10 times the size of Mexico City.

Beyond resource use, the report also underscores the structural inequity at the heart of the AI boom, with only 32 nations hosting AI-specific cloud infrastructure and 90 per cent of that capacity located in the US and China. It warns of a widening digital divide between nations that build and control AI systems and those that consume them, with the latter often bearing a disproportionate environmental burden caused by mineral extraction and e-waste.

RESPONSIBLE AI USE

Two main forces shape AI's operational footprint: how much we use it and how we use it.

US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recently confronted Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials regarding the severe water crises caused by the rapid expansion of AI data centres. She showed jars of brown water from a residential well located 1,000 feet from Meta's Stanton Springs Data Centre in Georgia. While India too is reeling with water crisis, there is little discussion so far on how AI data centres could be worsening this crisis —YOUTUBE/ AOC

This involves all tasks AI models perform, from text and code generation to image and video. Each of these tasks requires different levels of computational effort.

The report argues that responsible AI requires full value-chain governance, from mineral sourcing to recycling and safe disposal.

It calls for a twinning of capability and environmental stewardship – thinking about both what AI can do for us and the protection of the natural environment.

This would mean making environmental disclosures a routine part of AI development, at both the model and task level, and incorporating projected AI demand in climate and energy planning.

Responsible AI is crucial as countries are promoting and adopting AI across the government and the public sector.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, the government has launched a national AI strategy and a public service AI framework.

While the framework was informed by the OECD's values-based AI principles, including inclusive and sustainable development, there is no requirement for environmental disclosures and no regulator compiling energy use or emissions.

Likewise, in Australia, improving public services is part of the national AI plan. For example, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia has created Bowerbird, a machine learning-enabled mass audio and video transcription engine, to document material.

Both countries take a deliberate "light touch" and principles-based regulatory approach to AI. But this approach risks overlooking the growing environmental cost of AI that can't be solved by improving it.

The natural environment is foundational to the economy, culture and wellbeing. It should be at the centre of our thinking. It's time to rethink the AI innovation playbook and shift focus toward a sustainable tech future.

—The Conversation

> The report argues that responsible AI requires full value-chain governance, from mineral sourcing to recycling and safe disposal. It calls for a twinning of capability and environmental stewardship – thinking about both what AI can do for us and the protection of the natural environment.

SALAR ساہر

Poor NCR emission data failing pollution control

Despite multiple regulatory mechanisms to monitor and control industrial emissions in the National Capital Region (NCR), the information needed to evaluate their effectiveness remains fragmented and often difficult to access, according to a new analysis.

The analysis by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has revealed that emission monitoring data is inconsistently available across public portals, and ambient air quality monitoring reports are often dispersed across different administrative systems.

This has led to significant gaps in transparency and traceability of industrial emissions in the region, according to CSE's report, 'Behind the Smoke: Industrial Fuel Use, Emission Monitoring and Regulatory Blind Spots in the National Capital Region'.

Speaking to PTI on Friday, Nivit Kumar Yadav, programme director at CSE's sustainable industrialisation unit, said the analysis shows that the root of the region's pollution problem was not just the winter spike but also the lack of data-driven action taken during the summer months.

"Until regulatory bodies are strengthened with the capacity to compile, understand, and make data-driven decisions and plan accordingly, the massive monitoring network remains practically useless," he added.

For the analysis, the authors examined continuous emission monitoring system (CEMS) data from the real-time data monitoring system platform for 142 industrial units in the NCR region of Rajasthan and Haryana during the period 10-20 November, 2025.

CEMS data is supposed to show pollutant releases from industries' air emissions and effluent discharges.

However, the authors found that of the industrial facilities examined, only 58 facilities (40.8 per cent) had CEMS data available for download and analysis.

The remaining 84 facilities (59.2 per cent) either showed no data availability or had access restrictions that prevented data retrieval.

"This substantial data unavailability raises concerns about monitoring effectiveness and regulatory compliance," said the analysis.

The authors also looked at how the industries' ambient air quality monitoring data is recorded in the NCR region and disclosed in practice.

For this, they filed RTI applications with 18 State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) regional offices across Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan.

Thirteen of these offices provided a documented response, while five, Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) Nuh, HSPCB Palwal, HSPCB Mahendragarh, HSPCB Bahadurgarh, and UP Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) in Meerut, had no response recorded.

And, even among the offices that responded, the nature of disclosure remained limited.

The HSPCB Faridabad was the only office to provide ambient and workplace air quality monitoring reports.

"A recurring pattern across responses was the absence of data at source. Four HSPCB offices, Ballabhgarh, Gurugram North, Gurugram South, and Sonipat, stated that the requested information is not available or not maintained in their offices, while the HSPCB regional office, Rewari, reported that no mining project exists within its jurisdiction," said the analysis.

Another key finding is that industries switching away from high-emission fuels such as coal, furnace oil, and pet coke are rarely documented as traceable regulatory events.

Note that switching to relatively cleaner fuels has emerged as a key step in industrial air pollution control strategies implemented in the NCR in recent years.

In response to the RTIs requesting correspondence or permissions related to fuel switching, many SPCB regional offices across UP, Haryana, and Rajasthan said such information is either not available in a compiled form or is not maintained as a separate record, according to the analysis.

It added that for individuals seeking to understand industrial fuel use across the region, accessing this information in a consolidated form remains extremely difficult.

Subhrajit Goswami, programme officer at CSE, told PTI, "If environmental monitoring data is not routinely compiled at the source, it loses its day-to-day utility for effective decision-making. Air quality and industrial emission datasets should ideally be maintained as organised, readily accessible records for both the public and the regulators."

"When regional boards find it difficult to compile these reports, it highlights that even internal teams may be planning without a fully consolidated view of the region's compliance data," he added. *– PTI*

People walk on the Kartavya Path on a smoggy day in Delhi in January —PTI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

As cities burn, UNEP backs passive cooling over ACs as smart fix

India's cities are growing unbearable each summer, and it is the most vulnerable - the informal workers, the elderly, pregnant women, and infants - who suffer the worst of it, confined to concrete urban pockets where temperatures run several degrees higher than surrounding areas.

Among them, the informal workforce occupies a particularly vulnerable position, powering nearly half the nation's economy and accounting for an estimated 45 to 50 per cent of India's GDP, while remaining the most heat-exposed.

In an exclusive interview with PTI Videos on World Environment Day, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director Inger Andersen noted that the situation is deeply concerning, "particularly for those who work outdoors doing physical labour, and for the most vulnerable like the elderly, pregnant women, infants, and those living with other illnesses."

She further said construction workers, street vendors, agricultural labourers, and others in physically demanding outdoor occupations are particularly at risk, as extreme heat also threatens their livelihoods.

"Right now, heat stress kills more people every year than floods, storms, and wildfires combined. If we focus for a moment just on workers, we are talking about approximately 2.4 billion people, roughly 70 per cent of the global workforce, who are likely exposed to dangerous heat.

"In India, that includes around 82 per cent of the informal workforce," Andersen told PTI, adding that it is a global challenge that demands a comprehensive response.

"New Delhi is one of the hottest major cities on the planet. With humidity factored in, temperatures have been approaching 50 degrees, which is beyond livable," she said.

Outlining the dimensions of a comprehensive response that must be taken seriously, the UNEP Chief cited measures such as Heat Action Plans (HAPs), cooling centres, access to adequate water, early warning systems, shaded rest areas, cool roofs in informal settlements, and adjusted work hours during peak heat.

Among these, passive cooling emerges as one of the most underrated approaches. It includes cool roofs, green roofs, reflective windows and other design choices that are often framed only as climate solutions, but also work as a public health intervention hiding in plain sight.

"What is encouraging is that we are beginning to see meaningful investments in this space. From UNEP's side, we are proud to lead what we call the Cool Coalition. India, for instance, is putting one and a half billion dollars from its National Disaster Mitigation Fund into redesigning and reallocating resources for passive cooling," Andersen told PTI.

In a recent viral video, a man shared a Rs 800 rooftop cooling trick. He painted the roof of his house with a mix of lime powder aka white chuna, water, Fixit URP waterproofing solution and Fevicol to help the solution stick to the roof. This reflects a lot of the sunlight, and the main claimed it cut the heat by 15°C — SCREENGRAB

Drawing a comparison between walking through a countryside field and walking through a concrete urban setting, Andersen said cities need to be fundamentally rethought around cooling.

She cited the example of the Kashmir Gate Interstate Bus Terminal in Delhi, where a cool roof is being installed that will cover nearly 1,50,000 square feet and bring down temperatures for around one lakh commuters daily.

"India's flagship Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban scheme is also investing in passive cooling for approximately ten million homes by 2029," she added.

Passive cooling encompasses green roofs, reflective roofs, more trees where possible, smart buildings, and smart glazing, which can bring down temperatures and, in turn, reduce the cost of cooling and lower electricity bills.

The UN official said that passive cooling through thoughtful wall and roof design, glazing, shading, ventilation, and the creation of green and blue spaces is how costs can be brought down more affordably than relying on expensive, energy-intensive air conditioners.

'Beat the Heat' or 'Mutirão contra o Calor Extremo' is an international effort launched by the Brazil COP30 Presidency and the UNEP-led 'Cool Coalition' to accelerate the deployment of sustainable cooling and heat resilience solutions in cities worldwide, turning the ambitions of the Global Cooling Pledge into on-the-ground action, according to the UNEP.

More than 230 cities across over 40 countries and 108 partner organisations have joined the initiative, including 44 Indian cities - of which 30 are from Maharashtra and 11 from Tamil Nadu.

When asked if the current pace of heat adaptation in India is commensurate with the speed at which heat risk is growing, Andersen said, "It is a catch-up process, but we are very glad to see 44 cities enrolled (in 'Beat the Heat' initiative) and the government stepping into this space to lead."

"The reality, however, remains stark: across the world, more than one billion people lack adequate cooling, including many in India. If we do not act, that number will rise from one billion to three billion by 2050 as temperatures continue to climb," she added.

She underscored that urban heat is intense and the poor face the heaviest exposure, as local temperatures in cities can be more than ten degrees higher than in rural areas.

"Has India caught up? No, but then, no one has. What we need to see is consistent, steady investment in the cooling aspect, especially in urban settings, alongside a very proactive effort to address CO2 emissions and greenhouse gases, because ultimately that is how we keep global temperature rise within a livable range," the UNEP chief told PTI.

She further mentioned that 74 countries have pledged to reduce global cooling-related emissions by 68 per cent by 2050, and 134 out of 193 countries have integrated cooling into their Nationally Determined Contributions. *– PTI*

— MAGNIFIC

US' 1st private nuclear reactor achieves criticality

WASHINGTON, 5 JUNE

A privately developed small nuclear reactor in the US achieved its first criticality, marking the first such milestone in over four decades, officials announced. The Mark-0 demonstration reactor, developed by Antares Nuclear under the US Department of Energy's Reactor Pilot Programme, reached a self-sustaining chain reaction on Thursday. Energy Secretary Chris Wright called it "a historic moment" and a "rebirth of America's nuclear industry." Wright thanked President Donald Trump and scientists at Antares and Idaho National Laboratory. The test, described as "one of the most significant technological achievements in nuclear energy in over 40 years," will inform future reactor design and licensing. Antares CEO Jordan Bramble credited executive actions by the Trump administration for the milestone. —*PTI*

US imposes sanctions on Cuban President

WASHINGTON, 5 JUNE

The US has imposed sanctions on Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel, along with four other individuals, according to a filing on the US Treasury Department website. Included in the sanctions are Alejandro Castro Espín, the son of former President Raúl Castro. The sanctions come after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order expanding sanctions against the island. The new sanctions boost pressure on the Cuban government, but are far from the first time the US has imposed sanctions against heads of state or government and their relatives. The US hit former Sudanese President Omar Bashir and former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in the early 2000s, and more recently targeted former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife with sanctions. —*PTI*

Pakistan 'forever grateful' to Don for India truce: Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD, 5 JUNE

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed gratitude to US President Donald Trump for his intervention in securing a ceasefire with India last year. Addressing a reception at the US Embassy, Shehbaz described Pakistan-US ties as a "true and special relationship" spanning nearly eight decades. He credited Trump's "timely and most decisive intervention" for ending hostilities following the Pahalgam attack. Shehbaz called Trump "a man of peace" and praised his leadership, referencing longstanding cooperation in security, trade, science, and regional diplomacy efforts. —*PTI*

Aus cockroach kingpin caught with 1L illegal insects

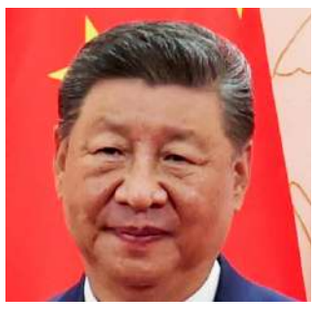
WELLINGTON, 5 JUNE

Over 1,00,000 illegal cockroaches, including Madagascar hissing and dubia species, were seized from a breeder in Bathurst, New South Wales, in Australia's largest-ever invertebrate bust, officials reported. Valued at USD 1,42,000, the haul included cockroaches up to 3 inches long. The department explained, "They're likely being sold as reptile food due to their size," but both species are illegal imports. The department warned that "exotic cockroaches have not undergone environmental risk assessment" and could threaten native wildlife. The breeder was not charged, but the insects will be euthanised. Officials emphasised strict biosecurity controls to prevent pest spread and protect agriculture. —*PTI*

China's Xi to visit N Korea after 7 yrs amid nuke expansion

This is weeks after Xi met with Putin, Trump

BEIJING, 5 JUNE



Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit North Korea next week, both countries announced on Friday, marking his first trip to the country in nearly seven years.

Xi will travel on a state visit from Monday to Tuesday, according to brief statements from Chinese and North Korean state media. His last visit was in June 2019.

The meeting comes just weeks after Xi held summits with US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing

The trip comes as China seeks to reinforce ties with its nuclear-armed neighbour, while North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has deepened cooperation with Russia, including military support for Moscow's war in Ukraine. In response, Kim has also renewed engagement with Beijing, North Korea's largest trade partner and aid provider.

Analysts say Xi's visit is aimed at reasserting China's influence over Pyongyang amid shifting regional alignments. The announcement follows reports that North Korea has unveiled a new nuclear facility, believed by South Korea's military to be a uranium enrichment plant, and Kim's pledge to expand nuclear capabilities "at an exponential rate".

Experts say Pyongyang is seeking recognition as a nuclear weapons state to push for sanctions relief and eventual arms control talks with the United States, which continues to oppose its nuclear programme under UN sanctions. —*PTI*

Israel strikes Lebanon as Hezbollah bins truce

X@SHAMEENSULEMAN

BEIRUT, 5 JUNE

A fragile US-mediated ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon came under strain on Friday after Israeli air strikes killed four people in southern Lebanon.

This was after Hezbollah on Thursday rejected the latest ceasefire agreement reached between Israel and the Lebanese government.

The agreement requires a complete cessation of Hezbollah fire and the withdrawal of its operatives from areas south of the Litani River. However, Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem rejected the deal, demanding a comprehensive ceasefire and a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

As fighting continued, the Israeli military issued fresh evacuation orders for villages north of the Litani River and coastal towns including Sarafand and Saksakiyeh, triggering reports of mass displacement.

Despite the renewed violence, US President Donald Trump said progress had been made towards ending the conflict, adding that he had spoken with both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and representatives of Hezbollah. Trump also said he would be willing to meet Iran's Supreme Leader if a broader peace agreement could be reached.

Meanwhile, the United Nations World Food Programme warned that the Iran war is pushing millions towards acute hunger. A new report found an additional 2.5 million people in Somalia, 2.3 million in Afghanistan and 1.3 million in Sri Lanka are struggling to meet basic food needs as rising oil prices fuel economic hardship.

Separately, Iran announced plans to charge security service fees for vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz, a move opposed by the United States, which insists the vital shipping route must remain open without tolls. —*Agencies*

Oman halts oil loading after blast at terminal

Oman has suspended crude oil loading operations at the Mina al Fahal export terminal following an explosion near its offshore loading facilities, according to sources familiar with the matter. The blast occurred between the terminal's two single-buoy mooring berths, SBM 1 and SBM 2, used to load crude onto tankers. Sources said the explosion is believed to have been caused by a drone attack, though authorities have not confirmed the cause. Shipping data showed several supertankers anchored off the port, indicating disruptions to loading operations. Mina al Fahal, near Muscat, handles most of Oman's oil exports and is a key hub in energy supply chains.

INDIA-BORN ENTREPRENEURS BEHIND 96 US UNICORNS: STUDY

WASHINGTON, 5 JUNE

Indian-born entrepreneurs have founded or co-founded 96 US unicorns, the highest number among immigrant founders of billion-dollar companies in America, according to a new study by the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP).

India topped the list of countries of origin, ahead of Israel (60 unicorns), the United Kingdom (47), China (41), Canada (30) and Russia (23). Among the Indian-founded firms is Perplexity AI, co-founded by Aravind Srinivas.

It found that immigrants founded 455 of the 775 US unicorns, accounting for 59 per cent of the total. Nearly two-thirds of unicorns were founded by immigrants, while almost 80 per cent have an immigrant founder.

Immigrant-founded unicorns have a combined valuation of USD 5 trillion and have created an average of 833 jobs each. Six Indian-origin entrepreneurs — Mohit Aron, Jyoti Bansal, Ashutosh Garg, Arvind Jain, Sachin Nayyar and Ajeet Singh — have founded two or more unicorns. —*PTI*

UN NUKE BODY UNABLE TO INSPECT IRAN'S STOCKPILE

TEHRAN, 5 JUNE

The UN nuclear watchdog has said it remains unable to inspect key Iranian nuclear facilities affected by last June's war, raising concerns over Tehran's nuclear programme.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it could not determine the current size, composition or location of Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium, nor confirm whether enrichment activities have ceased. The agency warned it was unable to fulfil its safeguards obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and urged Iran to comply. The only facility inspected since February was the Bushehr nuclear power plant. The IAEA estimates Iran holds 440.9kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent purity, close to weapons-grade levels. —*PTI*

The bill passed 52-47 shortly before 5am on Friday and will fund both agencies through the end of Trump's term —*PTI*

SENATE PASSES $70B BILL TO FUND IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT

WASHINGTON, 5 JUNE

The US Senate has approved a USD 70 billion funding package for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Border Patrol, ending months of delays caused by disputes over immigration policy and a controversial settlement fund linked to President Donald Trump.

The bill passed 52-47 shortly before 5am on Friday and will fund both agencies through the end of Trump's term. Republicans overcame multiple attempts by Democrats and some Republicans to permanently block a USD 1.776 billion settlement fund created under a legal agreement related to Trump's lawsuit over the leak of his tax returns.

A key amendment by Republican Senator Bill Cassidy, which would have redirected settlement payments to police officers injured during the 6 January, 2021. Capitol attack, was defeated. Other proposals to restrict payments from the fund also failed, despite concerns that some recipients could include Trump supporters involved in the riot.

The dispute exposed divisions within the Republican Party. Senate Majority Leader John Thune criticised the settlement but urged colleagues to keep the legislation focused on immigration enforcement.

The funding measure ends a prolonged standoff after Democrats blocked the bill earlier this year, demanding reforms to federal immigration enforcement following the fatal shooting of two protesters by federal agents in Minneapolis. Democrats had sought tighter oversight of immigration authorities, including greater use of judicial warrants and clearer identification requirements for officers.

Republicans ultimately used procedural measures to pass the bill without Democratic support. —*PTI*

'Won't interfere in delicate India-China ties'

ST PETERSBURG, 5 JUNE

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow will not interfere in the "delicate" relationship between India and China, expressing confidence that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping are committed to resolving their long-standing boundary dispute through dialogue.

Speaking to heads of leading global news agencies, including PTI, Putin said relations between Russia, India and China had developed naturally and independently. "Relations between Russia and India do not disturb China, and our relations with China do not disturb India," he said.

Referring to efforts by New Delhi and Beijing to repair ties strained by the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes, Putin said both leaders were working to address issues of mutual concern, including the border dispute.

The Russian leader also praised India's independent foreign policy and warned that Western attempts to pressure New Delhi into reducing ties with Moscow would undermine global stability.

He credited India's economic rise to "hard work" under Modi's leadership and said Russia aims to expand bilateral trade with India from the current USD 60 billion to USD 100 billion annually.

Putin recalled proposing meetings between the leaders of Russia, India and China, which led to the creation of the Russia-India-China (RIC) framework and later contributed to the emergence of BRICS.

He also rejected suggestions that Pakistan was under Chinese control, describing it as a large country with diverse international relationships, while acknowledging the importance of Islamabad's cooperation with Beijing. —*PTI*

Russia ready for peace if Kyiv compromises: Putin

ST PETERSBURG, 5 JUNE

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow is prepared to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine based on proposals discussed with US President Donald Trump, provided Kyiv is willing to make unspecified "compromises".

Speaking to international news agency heads, including PTI, Putin said Russia had accepted compromises outlined during talks with Trump in Anchorage and urged Ukraine to do the same to end the war "quickly and naturally".

His remarks came as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy publicly called for a face-to-face meeting with Putin and proposed a full ceasefire to facilitate negotiations. The Kremlin confirmed it had received the letter.

Putin claimed Russian forces were advancing across the battlefield, saying Moscow had recently captured around 2,440 sq km of territory and now controlled all of the Luhansk region, more than 85 per cent of Donetsk and about 80 per cent of Zaporizhzhia.

He dismissed the European Union as a potential mediator, arguing that countries seeking Russia's "strategic defeat" could not be neutral brokers.

Putin also questioned Zelenskyy's legitimacy, noting that his presidential term expired in 2024, though elections remain suspended under martial law.

He accused the West of supplying advanced drones to Ukraine and said Russia could expand the use of its Oreshnik hypersonic missile after recent test strikes.

Asked whether he intended to remain in office until 2036, Putin said it was "too early" to discuss future elections. While the constitution allows him to seek re-election in 2030, he said "only God knows" whether he would remain healthy enough to do so. —*PTI*

PRINCE OF CONTROVERSIES

Andrew was sub-letting royal cottages

- Andrew remains under scrutiny over his links to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

LONDON, 5 JUNE

Former Prince Andrew earned income by subletting cottages on the Royal Lodge estate, where he lived rent-free for more than two decades, according to a report by the UK's National Audit Office (NAO).

The review found that Andrew, formally known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, held a 2003 lease granting him a 30-room mansion and eight cottages near Windsor Castle for a nominal "peppercorn rent". He was permitted to sublet three cottages, although the report did not disclose how much income he generated.

The findings emerged after lawmakers requested greater scrutiny of royal property arrangements following Andrew's removal from royal duties and his eviction from Royal Lodge by King Charles III. Earlier this year, he moved to the Sandringham Estate.

The report also revealed that Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie live in rent-controlled properties at St James's Palace and Kensington Palace, with rents set at between 50 and 68 per cent of market value and paid from the King's private funds. Neither is considered a working royal.

Eleven working royals, including King Charles, Queen Camilla, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and Prince Edward and Sophie, receive official accommodation as part of their duties. William and Catherine also rent a family home near Windsor for £3,07,200 annually.

Critics said the findings highlighted a lack of accountability in royal finances. Buckingham Palace said the report reflected its commitment to transparency.

Andrew remains under scrutiny over his links to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. British police are investigating claims he shared confidential trade information with Epstein, though he has denied wrongdoing and has not been charged. —*PTI*

'TOP GUN: MAVERICK' ACTOR KILLED BY GIRLFRIEND'S SON

LOS ANGELES, 5 JUNE

Police have detained Michael Gledhill, the son of actor James Handy's girlfriend, in the death of the 81-year-old actor, found stabbed in Los Angeles. Officers responded to a home on Wednesday morning after a 911 call in which the caller said, "I am the son of man, I just killed the man of sin," according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

The actor, known for roles in 'Jumanji' and 'Top Gun: Maverick,' was discovered in the front yard, unconscious and suffering from a chest stab wound. He was rushed to hospital and later pronounced dead. Gledhill, 44, who lives at the residence with his mother, admitted to officers that he was the person they were seeking. He was booked on suspicion of murder, with bail set at USD 2 million. Born in New York, Handy has appeared in numerous films and TV series, including 'NCIS: Los Angeles,' 'The Closer,' and 'Cold Case.' Pam Ellis-Evenas from the Ellis Talent Group described him as "a talented, humble or gracious client and friend." —*PTI*

RBI increases FY27 inflation forecast to 5.1%

Rising energy prices due to the Iran war threaten to raise India's inflation

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its inflation forecast for 2026-27 to 5.1 per cent, up from 4.6 per cent, signalling the possibility of one to two rate hikes in the coming months, experts said after the policy decision on Friday.

The RBI attributed the revision largely to mounting input costs triggered by the pass-through of higher global energy prices to retail rates of petrol and diesel, compounded by risks from the prolonged West Asia conflict, and global supply chain disruptions.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said that going by the forecasts made on inflation, it does look like there would be rate hikes in the coming months as inflation rises.

Devendra Kumar Pant, Chief Economist, India Ratings & Research, said the economy's biggest unknown remains the duration of the war.

Deloitte India Economist Rumki Majumdar said the RBI will probably use a wider toolkit — such as liquidity operations, forex intervention and policy communication — to manage inflation and currency volatility, having prioritised supportive domestic financial conditions for growth for now.

The RBI kept its benchmark repo rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and announced measures to attract foreign capital and support the rupee, including scrapping taxes on interest income and capital gains in government securities, offering concessional terms for foreign-currency deposits from non-resident Indians and subsidising hedging costs for select offshore borrowings.

Assocham said the decision to hold rates would give a big strength to business sentiments. "We expect economic growth to remain strong this financial year too, despite the uncertain global economic environment and West Asia war winds," said Saurabh Sanyal, Secretary General, Assocham. *—PTI*

Citing the ongoing West Asia conflict, the RBI raised its inflation forecast for FY27 to 5.1 per cent, from 4.6 per cent *–AI*

Monsoons may weaken rural demand: RBI

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra stated that a projected deficit in the south-west monsoon could affect rural demand and private consumption, though mitigation measures are expected to cushion the impact.

He highlighted that programmes for crop diversification, water conservation, and climate-resilient practices could help. Malhotra also warned of broader risks from rising input costs and supply disruptions, which might weigh on economic activity.

The RBI lowered FY27 GDP growth forecast to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent, citing global and weather risks. *—PTI*

RBI policy to boost foreign capital inflow

RBI introduced measures to boost foreign capital inflows and stabilise the rupee, including expanding the basket of government securities available to overseas investors and easing FPI investment limits.

"These measures, along with tax benefits, should attract foreign capital," RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said. The government has also scrapped long-term capital gains tax on FIIs in government securities, raised NRI and OCI limits in listed equities, and eased FPI restrictions.

The RBI will offer a concessional foreign-exchange swap facility for ECBs until September 2026. Malhotra stated, "We do expect a healthy flow of foreign capital," aiming to support India's sovereign debt market and strengthen the rupee amid global volatility.

India's forex reserves remain healthy at USD 682.3B: RBI

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced India's forex reserves stood at a comfortable USD 682.3 billion, sufficient for about 11 months of import cover. He said, "Our foreign exchange reserves provide a strong buffer against external shocks, and we are fully prepared to respond as required." Despite a recent dip of USD 7.511 billion during the week ending 22 May, reserves remain well above the previous USD 686.8 billion at the start of January. Malhotra highlighted recent policy initiatives, including FDI agreements, ethanol blending, energy transition, and easing restrictions for land-bordering countries, which aim to strengthen the balance of payments. He added, "While our reserves are strong, we remain vigilant and ready to respond to market conditions." *—PTI*

FPI investment in G-Secs exempted from capital gains tax

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The government on Friday, in an ordinance amending the Income Tax Act, exempted Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) from income tax on interest earnings and capital gains from Government Securities G-Secs.

It is effective from 1 April, according to a gazette notification dated 5 June.

The move comes as it looked to attract foreign capital to counteract pressure on the rupee.

The finance ministry said in a statement that the exemption would apply to any interest or capital gains arising to FPIs on or after 1 April in respect of investments in Government Securities.

The Ministry of Finance introduced another set of measures to enhance the ease of investment for individual Persons Resident Outside India (PROIs) and FPIs.

It has decided to expand the list of specified securities under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) to also include new issuances in government securities in tenors of 15-year, 30-year and 40-year as also Sovereign Green Bonds in the tenors of FAR-eligible securities.

Three restrictions on FPI investments under General Route have been removed – short-term investment limit, concentration limit and the security-wise limit for investments by FPIs in G-Secs – while retaining the overall quantitative investment limit.

The 'general' and 'long-term' categories of investment limits will also be merged into a single limit for investment in in G-Secs and State Government Securities (SGS).

These measures will help in development of a smooth yield curve, and attract stable systematic inflow of long-term, patient foreign capital, including long-term investors.

This such covers pension funds, insurance companies, and sovereign wealth funds, and boost foreign exchange inflows for the country, it added. *—PTI*

HITS LOWER CIRCUIT

Rajesh Exports shares fall for 2nd day

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Shares of gems and jewellery firm Rajesh Exports Ltd (REL) further dropped 5 per cent to hit the lower circuit limit of Rs 99.45 on the BSE and 4.99 per cent to Rs 98.73 on Friday.

The development occurred amid concerns that the company allegedly inflated its consolidated revenues by more than Rs 15 lakh crore over five years by attributing massive revenues to overseas subsidiaries.

This particularly included the Switzerland-based Valcambi SA, despite the subsidiary's audited standalone financial statements showing only a fraction of those amounts, said an interim order by Sebi.

The order also noted that the company had failed to upload the financial statements of any subsidiary or step-down subsidiary on its website and did not furnish critical underlying data, despite repeated summons from investigators.

The regulator barred Rajesh Exports' CEO **Rajesh Mehta** from dealing in the firm's securities and further directed the company to make true and fair disclosures of their financial statements, related party transactions and other disclosures.

In a statement on Thursday, Rajesh Exports denied any financial irregularities, saying there seemed to be a communication gap between the markets regulator and the firm. *—PTI*

Australia's AirTrunk to invest Rs 3 lakh cr in India data centres

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Australia based hyperscale data centre specialist AirTrunk plans to invest more than Rs 3 lakh crore (USD 30 billion) in India by 2030, supporting digital infrastructure growth and positioning the country as a key global hub.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that AirTrunk aims to develop 5GW of data centre capacity after his meeting with CEO Robin Khuda. Modi stated, "India's digital infrastructure journey is gathering remarkable momentum.

This is among the largest proposed investments in the country's digital ecosystem." Backed by Blackstone and CPPIB, the company's investment will be among the largest in India's digital infrastructure, fostering growth in cloud and AI sectors. AirTrunk's pipeline includes 600MW across Mumbai, Chennai, and Hyderabad.

CEO Khuda praised Modi's vision, saying, "India has the scale, talent, and ambition required to become a global AI powerhouse." Meanwhile, PM Modi visited Larsen & Toubro's Hazira facility in Gujarat, reviewing ongoing projects including the 'Zorawar' tanks developed with DRDO.

He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for projects worth Rs 22,000 crore, including a 200-bed ESIC Hospital in Surat and a new terminal at Daman's NAMO Airport. *—PTI*

'INDIA TO SURPASS CHINA IN GLOBAL GDP SHARE BY 2060'

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

India is expected to surpass China in its share of global GDP measured in purchasing power parity (PPP) by 2060, according to a report by the World Inequality Lab (WIL), a French research laboratory.

The report states that China's share in world GDP is currently about 20 per cent in PPP terms. "However, China's population share is falling very fast, from 23 per cent of the world population in 1945 to about 17 per cent in 2025 and less than 8 per cent in 2100.

"As a consequence, the share of China in world GDP is projected to stabilise and decline in the second half of the 21st century, and to be overtaken by India around 2060," it said.

PPPs measure the total amount of goods and services that a single unit of a country's currency can buy in another country.

The latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) highlights that India's GDP growth is projected to reach USD 4.15 trillion in 2026. *—PTI*

Google fires staff in cloud, cybersecurity divisions

MOUNTAIN VIEW, 5 JUNE

Tech giant Google has laid off an unknown number of employees in its Cloud division, including its one of its top security units, the Threat Intelligence Group, and Mandiant, a cybersecurity firm it bought in 2022. Anonymous sources suggested it could have been due to the company shifting focus to its AI offerings, and other growth areas.

Other major tech companies have also been a part of this trend, with Meta cutting 10% of its workforce in May and Cloudflare laying off 1,100 employees in the same month. Most have cited reinvestment in AI as the reason.

"We regularly evaluate our internal structures to ensure we are best positioned to meet the evolving demands of our customers and the industry," a Google spokesperson told Business Insider.

This comes after the CEO of Google DeepMind, the company's AI arm, told WIRED in a May 2026 interview that companies should use AI to help people be more productive, not lay people off. *—Salar News*

URGES SLOW DOWN

Anthropic warns of autonomous AI growth

SAN FRANCISCO, 5 JUNE

AI major Anthropic warned that the rapid pace of AI evolution could soon allow the technology to design and develop its own successor.

In a report, the AI chatbot maker questioned the growing trend of delegating AI development to AI systems. Taken far enough, and given enough compute, that trend points to an AI system capable of fully autonomously designing and developing its own successor," Anthropic said.

To show just how fast AI is accelerating its own development, the company shared that Anthropic engineers are shipping eight times more code per quarter on average than it recorded from 2021–2025.

–AI

> "If systems are capable of building their own successors, the ways we secure, monitor and shape their behaviour grow more important," Anthropic warned.

"If systems are capable of fully building their own successors, the ways we secure them, monitor them, and shape their behaviour all grow much more important," Anthropic warned.

The extent to which the AI models can finish a task on their own is doubling roughly every four months.

Anthropic urged a slowdown in AI development to allow more time to address its immense implications. "In 2027, AI systems could be capable of tasks that take a person weeks," the company said.

The Claude-maker recently raised USD 65 billion in a funding round valuing the company at close to a trillion dollars. It has confidentially filed for an IPO amid a boom in AI shares as investors continue to pour money in AI stocks, remaining bullish on the prospects. *—ANI*

Forex kitty recovers by $938M to $682B

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

India's foreign exchange reserves increased by USD 938 million to USD 682.321 billion during the week ending 28 May, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced on Friday.

The reserves had previously declined by USD 7.511 billion to USD 681.384 billion. The reserve had peaked at an all-time high of USD 728.494 billion in the week ending February 27, before the Middle East conflict impacted its value.

The ensuing weeks saw a decline as the rupee faced pressure, prompting RBI intervention through dollar sales.

For the week ending 29 May, foreign currency assets, a key component of reserves, rose USD 3.116 billion to USD 546.148 billion.

Gold reserves declined USD 2.186 billion to USD 112.6 billion. SDRs remained steady at USD 18.747 billion, while India's reserve position with the International Monetary Fund increased USD 8 million to USD 4.826 billion. *—PTI*

Rupee rises by 81P to close at Rs 94.93

MUMBAI, 5 JUNE

The rupee appreciated 81 paise to close at 94.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday expectedly kept interest rates unchanged and said the forex reserve stood at USD 682.3 billion. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.72, then touched an intraday high of 94.89 and finally ended the session at 94.93 (provisional), registering a rise of 81 paise from its previous close. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 116.67 points to settle at 74,243.34, while the Nifty fell 49.85 points to 23,366.70. Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 4,447.06 crore on a net basis on Thursday. *—PTI*

Gold plunges to ₹1.58 lakh/10g over inflation fears

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold prices plunged by Rs 1,221 or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 1,58,326 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 8,346 lots in futures trade on Friday. This came as disruptions to energy supplies through the Strait of Hormuz continued to fuel inflation concerns and strengthen expectations of higher interest rates globally, denting investor sentiment. The US Dollar Index held steady near 99.4, supported by continued safe-haven demand amid regional uncertainty, said Pinky Yadav, Commodity Fundamental Analyst, Choice Broking. In the international markets, Comex gold futures for the August contract slipped USD 16.63 to USD 4,488.37 per ounce in New York. *—PTI*

Mkt edges lower amid profit-taking post-RBI policy

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Friday amid profit-taking after the RBI lowered its growth expectations for the fiscal year and forecast inflation to rise. BSE Sensex declined 116.67 points, or 0.16 per cent, to settle at 74,243.34. During the day, it hit a high of 74,717.57 and a low of 73,988.75, gyrating 728.82 points. A total of 2,138 stocks declined, while 2,056 advanced and 205 remained unchanged on the BSE. NSE Nifty dipped 49.85 points, or 0.21 per cent, to end at 23,366.70. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 532.4 points, or 0.71 per cent, and the Nifty dipped 181.05 points, or 0.76 per cent. BSE SmallCap Select index declined 0.24 per cent, while the MidCap Select index went up by 0.29 per cent. *—PTI*

IFC invests $50M to boost India's green hydrogen sector

NEW DELHI, 5 JUNE

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a World Bank Group arm, announced a USD 50 million investment in Hygenco Green Energies Private Ltd to promote green hydrogen in India. Alongside Siemens Financial Services, the Clean Technology Fund, and others, IFC signed a USD 105 million agreement supporting green hydrogen projects. The funding will develop commercially attractive projects, expand green hydrogen supply, and support India's National Green Hydrogen Mission. Hygenco aims to create over 1,000 jobs in five years, fostering sustainable industrial growth. Imad N Fakhoury, IFC's South Asia Regional Director, said, "Green hydrogen represents the most tangible pathway toward decarbonising many sectors." Hygenco CEO Amit Bansal highlighted the sector's long-term potential. *—PTI*

India's one-off Test against AFG carries no WTC points

India-Afghanistan one-off Test will hinge on how batters tackle spin bowling: Head coach Pybus

MULLANPUR, 5 JUNE

India's one-off Test against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh may mark the beginning of their red-ball season, but the result will have no bearing on their World Test Championship (WTC) ambitions.

Battling demons of a horrendous home Test run in the not-so-distant past but a formidable unit, India are pitted against a plucky Afghanistan in a one-off Test here that might help the hosts figure out a balanced combination, starting Saturday.

HEAD TO HEAD
India and Afghanistan have played exactly 1 Test match against each other. India won that solitary match in June 2018 in Bengaluru by an innings and 262 runs

India's KL Rahul and others during a practice session ahead of the Test match against Afghanistan in New Chandigarh on Friday -PTI

In 2018, Afghanistan lost 10 wickets in a session between lunch and tea on the second day of the Test against India. The next 10 fell by the wayside between tea and the end of the day's play, which was also the end of the game.

In 2026, Hashmatullah Shahidi would want his team to at least stretch the home side, which is going through a tough transition phase and will be in experimental mode during this game, trying different combinations.

However, the Indians would not have forgotten the 0-2 drubbing handed by a meticulously prepared South Africa last year and would do well to not take the opposition lightly despite the gulf in experience.

A stable No.3 and Ravindra Jadeja's potential successor in red-ball cricket are the two pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that head coach Gautam Gambhir and skipper Shubman Gill would like to fix during this game before the important two-match Test series against Sri Lanka in August.

Afghanistan head coach Richard Pybus

Afghanistan head coach Richard Pybus on Friday said the course of the one-off Test against India starting here on Saturday will be decided by how batters from both teams tackle the spin challenge.

India and Afghanistan will face off here on Saturday in what will only be their second-ever Test in history, having played another one-off game in Bengaluru in June 2018. That game was won by India inside two days.

"The Mullanpur pitch, for how long grass cover can hold the pitch (together) and how well both sides play with spin bowling playing a huge part, will decide (the course of the Test)," Pybus told the reporters here on the eve of the Test.

Afghanistan will be without their star spinner Rashid Khan, who has been rested to manage his workload and also prolong his white-ball availability. The right-arm spinner had featured in the Indian Premier League campaign for the Gujarat Titans, where the team reached the final.

Pybus said Rashid has had a long-standing back related.

"Rashid Khan has a long-standing back problem, but I will have conversations with him if there is any potential to play some red-ball cricket," Pybus said.

Having taken charge from fellow Englishman Jonathan Trott, Pybus said he has spoken with the former middle-order batter about Afghan cricket.

"I had a chat with Jonathan Trott to understand his journey and congratulated him for developing a side," Pybus said.

Sai hasn't got a long run: Gambhir

India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Friday declared that Sai Sudharsan will get an extended run at the No.3 slot in Test cricket as the young left-hander's six underwhelming appearances in the format aren't enough to make a final judgement on his capabilities.

Sudharsan hasn't really looked at home in the six Tests he has played, aggregating 302 runs at a poor average of 27.45, but the head coach said he would be preferred over his nearest competitor, Devdutt Padikkal, who has been waiting in the wings since the 2024 Test match against Australia in Perth.

"Honestly, Sai hasn't got a fair chance. He's only played what, a handful of Test matches? And he started his Test career in England, which we all know is not the easiest place," Gambhir said ahead of the one-off Test against Afghanistan starting here on Saturday.

India vs Afghanistan Match starts at 9.30 am IST

Shreyas Iyer will formally replace Suryakumar Yadav as India's new T20 captain when the national selection panel meets here on Saturday to finalise squads for the white-ball tour of the UK and the subsequent Asian Games in Japan.

The tour of the UK will feature a couple of T20 Internationals against Ireland on June 26 and 28 in Belfast, followed by a trip to England for five T20Is and three ODIs beginning July 1.

The Asian Games will take place in September-October in Aichi-Nagoya, and the squad is being announced early to meet the deadlines set by the event organisers.

Shreyas Iyer joins Kabuni as super coach

India batter Shreyas Iyer on Friday joined Kabuni as a super coach ahead of the AI-powered sports technology platform's launch.

Former cricketers Sourav Ganguly, AB de Villiers and Shane Watson are the other super coaches on the platform, which aims to provide opportunities for schools, parents and aspiring cricketers. Its nationwide tournament, named "Want to play for a legend?" is open to cricketers between the ages of 12 and 16 and will be held this month. —PTI

SKY falls: Shreyas Iyer is now India's T20I captain

Shreyas Iyer is set to replace Suryakumar Yadav as India's T20I captain when the national selection panel meets on Saturday to finalise squads for the white-ball tour of the UK and the Asian Games in Japan.

The decision follows the BCCI Apex Council meeting and comes despite Suryakumar leading India to a successful T20 World Cup title defence in March. PTI had reported earlier that the 35-year-old was not only being removed as captain but was also likely to be dropped from the squad owing to poor form over the past 18 months and concerns over a lingering wrist injury. This is the second consecutive year that India's selectors have made a major leadership change soon after a global title triumph. In 2025, Rohit Sharma was replaced as ODI captain by Shubman Gill months after guiding India to the Champions Trophy title.

Iyer, 31, who missed the T20 World Cup squad, is expected to bat at No. 4 and has been rewarded for his leadership credentials. He remains the only captain to have guided three IPL franchises — Delhi Capitals, Kolkata Knight Riders and Punjab Kings — to the final, winning the title once. Young Mumbai Indians batter Tilak Varma is expected to be named vice-captain, while 15-year-old batting prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is likely to earn his maiden senior call-up.

The UK tour comprises two T20Is against Ireland in Belfast on June 26 and 28, followed by five T20Is and three ODIs in England from July 1.

Separate squads will also be named for the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya in September-October. Tilak could lead that side, with Sooryavanshi among the contenders. Pacer Prince Yadav and left-arm spinner Harsh Dubey are also in contention.

Selectors are also expected to discuss whether veteran seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar, 36, merits a recall after claiming 28 wickets in this year's IPL.

-PTI

India seek sixth SAFF Women's Championships title

MARGAO, 5 JUNE

An unbeaten run in the tournament and goals galore in their kitty, a confident India will start as favourites when they face defending champions Bangladesh in the summit clash of the SAFF Women's Championships here on Saturday. India would be looking for a record-extending sixth title in the regional tournament with a win against arch rivals Bangladesh, whom they have beaten 3-0 in the group stage.After five title wins on the trot, India could not even reach the finals in the last two editions when Bangladesh walked away with the trophy after beating Nepal on both occasions in 2022 and 2024. The Crispin Chhetri-coached home side would be eager to make amends for the losses in the earlier two editions and regain the title they had won last in 2019.—PTI

-PTI

Pak will not send team to India for fencing tournament

LAHORE, 5 JUNE

Pakistan will not be sending its team to India for the Asian Fencing Championships. Usman Ahmad, the secretary of the Pakistan Fencing Federation, said that the organisers had not provided any assurances for the visas and security of the Pakistani players in India. "Without these guarantees, we decided not to participate in the championship," Usman said. The championship is being held in New Delhi from 18 to 24 June. He said it was the responsibility of the organisers to get government clearances and assurances for visas and security. "We twice contacted the organising committee and the Indian Fencing Association to get the assurances, but we didn't get them," he said.—PTI

Zverev battles past Mensik to reach second Roland Garros final

ROME, 5 JUNE

Alexander Zverev moved to within one win of achieving a long-held dream once again on Friday at Roland Garros, where he secured his return to the championship match.

The second-seeded German expertly navigated a mid-match surge from 20-year-old Jakub Mensik to earn a convincing 7-5, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 semi-final victory at the clay-court major. Through to his fourth major final — and second at Roland Garros — Zverev has earned another opportunity to claim his first Grand Slam title when he returns to Court Philippe-Chatrier on Sunday.

"He started playing amazingly in the third set," Zverev said of Mensik. "He really stepped up to another level. But this is a Grand Slam, it's best-of-five set matches. Opponents are going to play better. You have to deal with it... I did, and I hope to play another great match on Sunday."

Following the early exits of fellow title contenders Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic, the draw opened up considerably, but Zverev continued to power through his section of it. The 29-year-old has dropped just two sets across his six wins en route to becoming the fifth active man to reach multiple championship matches at Roland Garros.

Qualifier Maja Sets Up French Open Final Clash With Mirra Andreeva

Maja Chwalinska made French Open history on Thursday as the world number 114 became the first qualifier in the professional era to reach the Roland Garros final, where she will take on Mirra Andreeva. The Pole downed Diana Shnaider 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 in the last four to join Russian 19-year-old Andreeva, a straight-sets winner over Marta Kostyuk, in Saturday's title-decider. Should she beat Andreeva in the final, Chwalinska will become just the second woman to come through qualifying and win a Grand Slam final in any major since the Open era began, after Emma Raducanu's title run at the US Open in 2021. The 24-year-old said her run in the French capital was "like a dream", moments after beating 25th seed Shnaider, who, a day before, had eliminated world number one Aryna Sabalenka.

"I don't know what's going on, I just, I dunno what to say. I'm sorry, I'm just very happy," she added to raucous applause on Court Philippe Chatrier. Chwalinska, appearing in her first main draw in Paris, has won nine matches across a three-week campaign at Roland Garros that started with three rounds of qualifying last month. —PTI

U-18 MEN'S ASIA CUP

India beat Pakistan 5-3

KAKAMIGAHARA, 5 JUNE

The Indian hockey team showed incredible character to defeat arch-rivals Pakistan 5-3 in a high-voltage semi-final match of the U18 Men's Asia Cup here on Friday.

Trailing 2-3 until the final quarter, India produced an outstanding attacking display in the final minutes to secure their place in the summit clash. The match began with a quiet and tense opening, as both teams fought hard for control in the midfield. India found their rhythm in the 12th minute when a brilliant run from their own half forced a defensive error from Pakistan, earning India a penalty stroke.

Forward Ashish Tani Purti (12') stepped up and calmly converted it to give India an early 1-0 lead, which they maintained until the end of the first quarter.

Pakistan came out playing aggressively in the second quarter and won their first penalty corner in the 16th minute. Indian goalkeeper Ayush Rajak and defender Ansh Bahutra combined perfectly to save a powerful drag-flick from Ahmad Uzair.

Pakistan kept pressing and found their equaliser in the 27th minute when Adeel intercepted a pass, broke through the defence, and scored a field goal to make it 1-1 at halftime.

The third quarter saw intense action from both sides. India reclaimed the lead in the 35th minute when Shahrukh Ali (35') capitalised on quick passing and smashed the ball into the net. However, the joy was short-lived as Pakistan responded just two minutes later through a field goal by Muhammad Farhan Aslam in the 37th minute. —PTI

Karun Nair leads at Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 auction

BENGALURU, 5 JUNE

India middle-order batter Karun Nair on Friday attracted the highest bid of Rs 18 lakh from Coastal Kings Mangaluru at the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 players auction.The fifth edition of the tournament will be played from 20 June to 12 July across Mysuru, Hubballi and Bengaluru. Shivamogga Yodhas too made their presence felt in their first season, securing promising Ravichandran Smaran, who plays for Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL, for Rs 15.75 lakh.Hubli Tigers made a major statement at the auction, acquiring Abhinav Manohar for Rs 13.50 lakh. India and Punjab Kings pacer Vyshak Vijaykumar was drafted in by Mysore Warriors for Rs 8.25 lakh. India stars Devdutt Padikkal and Prasidh Krishna also joined the Warriors for Rs 2.5 lakh each. —PTI

FIFA BANS REFILLABLE WATER BOTTLES AT WC STADIUMS

MEXICO, 5 JUNE

FIFA has reversed its policy on refillable water bottles just days before the World Cup begins, prohibiting fans from bringing them into any of the tournament's 16 North American stadiums where temperatures are expected to reach 90 degrees Fahrenheit and above.

The updated "Stadium Code of Conduct" dated Tuesday marks a departure from previous rules that allowed fans to carry transparent, reusable bottles up to one litre capacity. The new policy states, "for the avoidance of doubt, reusable water bottles may not be brought into the stadium."

The Free Lions, an English fan group, criticised the last-minute change on Thursday, calling it "just the latest money grab." The group said FIFA had previously assured fans they could bring empty plastic bottles to fill with freely available water at a tournament where heat and extreme weather are expected factors. "In all of our discussions, free water availability in stadiums was a key one, and we were assured by FIFA that this would be the case," the fan group said. —PTI

WORLD CUP WARM-UP

MEXICO BEATS SERBIA 5-1

TOLUCA, 5 JUNE

The Mexican national team rallied from an early deficit to beat Serbia 5-1 on Thursday, concluding preparations for its opening match of the World Cup. Petar Stanic gave the Serbs the lead in the 19th minute, but Johan Vázquez equalised in the 34th. Stefan Bukinac levelled the score with an own goal in the 45th, and Raúl Jiménez added a goal in the 57th.

Adem Advic scored another own goal in the 72nd, and Luis Chavez sealed the victory in the 90th "We've been preparing for 20 or 22 months.

Mexico's Brian Gutierrez (26) attempts a shot on goal against Serbiar -X/@MEXICO

Choosing the final roster wasn't easy, and we had setbacks along the way with 12 injuries," said coach Javier Aguirre at a press conference.

Mexico opens the World Cup on June 11 against South Africa at Azteca Stadium. On the 18th, the Mexicans will face South Korea in Guadalajara and return to the nation's capital on June 24 to play the Czech Republic.

Mexico is undefeated in its last eight games and hasn't lost since November, when it was defeated by Paraguay in a friendly.

"Beyond the result, we're on the rise. We're in good spirits, a positive attitude, and physically fit," Aguirre added. "We're in good shape." —PTI

NEYMAR RULED OUT OF BRAZIL'S FINAL WORLD CUP WARM-UP AGAINST EGYPT

NEW YORK, 5 JUNE

Brazil will be without star forward Neymar for their final FIFA World Cup warm-up match against Egypt after the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) confirmed that the veteran attacker will remain at the team's training base in New Jersey to continue treatment on a calf injury.

The decision was taken to allow Neymar to undergo intensive physiotherapy and physical recovery rather than travel with the squad to Cleveland for Saturday's friendly, the Selecao's last preparatory fixture before the start of the World Cup in the United States, as per goal.com.

Neymar has not played for nearly three weeks after suffering a grade two calf strain while representing Santos in a Brazilian league match against Coritiba.

The injury has sidelined him for both club and country, prompting Brazil's medical staff to adopt a cautious approach ahead of the tournament. —PTI